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Fashioning Change

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OF CLOTHING IN
HIGH- AND
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ENGLAND



Andrea Denny-Brown

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—Sarah-Grace Heller, The Ohio State University

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INTERVENTIONS: NEW STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL CULTURE
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Fashioning Change

THE TROPE OF CLOTHING
IN HIGH- AND LATE-MEDIEVAL ENGLAND



Andrea Denny-Brown



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS • COLUMBUS

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Denny-Brown, Andrea.

Fashioning change : the trope of clothing in high- and late-medieval England / Andrea Denny-Brown.

p. cm.—(Interventions: new studies in medieval culture)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8142-1190-8 (cloth : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-0-8142-9291-4 (cd)

1. Clothing and dress in literature—History—To 1500. 2. Clothing and dress—England—15th century. 3. Costume—England—15th century. I. Title. II. Series: Interventions : new studies in medieval culture.

PR149.C67D46 2012

820.9'355—dc23

2012012235

Cover design by Laurence J. Nozik

Text design by Juliet Williams

Type set in Adobe Garamond Pro

Printed by Thomson-Shore, Inc.

∞ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials. ANSI Z39.48-1992.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Matt and Lucy

Imagine (if possible) a woman dressed in an endless garment, one that is woven of everything the magazine of Fashion says, for this garment without end is proffered through a text which is itself unending.

—Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*

The mind is a metaphor of the world of objects which is itself but an endless circle of mutually reflecting metaphors.

—Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



I would like to express my first thanks to Christopher Baswell for his unwavering confidence in me since my years as an undergraduate and in particular for his discerning eye and his invaluable suggestions with regard to this project when it was in dissertation form. I would also like to thank Timea Szell, whose humor and brilliance sparked my first interest in medieval literature, and Sarah Gyllenstierna, whose intelligence and friendship have always inspired my own critical endeavors. From my years at Columbia University I would also like to thank Robert W. Hanning for his steady, guiding hand through the early drafts of this project and for his uncanny ability to articulate in a few words the very heart of my own modest intellectual pursuits. I would like to thank Joan M. Ferrante for her impeccable knowledge of allegory and for her passion for her subject matter; and Jean E. Howard for her patient shaping of my theoretical objectives. The Medieval Guild of Columbia University offered much helpful and lively engagement with this project in its nascent stage, especially Nicole R. Rice, Donna Alfano Bussell, Marlene Villalobos Hennessy, Mary Agnes Edsall, Geoffrey Rector, and Heather Blurton. I would also like to offer my gratitude to The American Association of University Women, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The North American Council on British Studies, The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, The Huntington Library, and The Associate Alumni of Barnard College for their support of this project at that stage.

In my years at the University of California at Riverside, I have had the great fortune to be surrounded by supportive and generous colleagues and friends. I would like especially to thank John Ganim for his insight, encouragement, and unflagging collegiality. Heidi Brayman Hackel, Susan Zieger, Vorris Nunley, Chris Abani, Sabine Doran, Jeremy Kaye, Benjamin Liu, Deborah Willis, and Katherine Kinney have all offered helpful advice and

critical engagement. This book has also gained invaluable benefit from many thoughtful interlocutors beyond my campus, and I would like especially to thank Seth Lerer, Paul Strohm, Carolyn Dinshaw, Susan Crane, E. Jane Burns, Laura Hodges, D.Vance Smith, Frank Grady, and Geraldine Heng for their input and support. Kathy Lavezzo, William Kuskin, Robert Meyer-Lee, Catherine Sanok, Jessica Brantley, Claire M. Waters, Rebecca Krug, and Susan Phillips have also offered helpful feedback on various stages of this project. I am particularly grateful for the friendship of Seeta Chaganti, Elizabeth Allen, and Patricia Dailey, each of whom provided invaluable critiques on portions of the manuscript. And I owe a special thanks to Joanna Scott, Matthew McGraw, Megan Stein, and Thomas Schneider for their careful assistance, and to all of my graduate and undergraduate students for their invigorating discussions about many of these texts.

I am grateful to the University of California Office of the President for supporting this research, to the University of California at Riverside for providing a variety of grants and fellowships, to the university's Center for Ideas and Society for providing the most stimulating residency I have experienced to date, and to The Huntington Library for providing a quiet office upstairs at a crucial stage of the project. My research was facilitated by the helpful staffs of The Huntington Library, The Pierpont Morgan Library, The British Library, The Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Trinity Hall Library, Cambridge, and the Venerable English College Library, Rome. I am indebted to the anonymous readers of this manuscript, who later revealed themselves to be Sarah-Grace Heller and Maura Nolan. And I owe special thanks to Malcolm Litchfield, Ethan Knapp, Maggie Diehl, and the editorial staff of The Ohio State University Press for shepherding the book through the publishing process.

I would like to thank the University of Notre Dame Press, the University of Iowa Press, Duke University Press, and Palgrave Macmillan for permission to adapt material from earlier essays published. Chapter 2 is a revised and expanded version of "Fashioning Change: Wearing Fortune's Garments in Medieval England," *Philological Quarterly* 87, no. 1–2 (Winter–Spring 2008): 9–32; part of chapter 3 first appeared as "Old Habits Die Hard: Vestimentary Change in William Durandus's *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*," in the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 39, no. 3 (2009): 546–70; chapter 4 grew out of my earlier work in "Povre Griselda and the All-Consuming *Archewyves*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 28 (2006): 77–115, and also includes ideas first explored in "Lydgate's Golden Cows: Appetite and Avarice in *Bycorne and Chychevache*," *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material*

Culture in the Fifteenth Century, ed. Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 35–56.

Finally, I would also like to give my heartfelt thanks to my best friend, colleague, and collaborator Lisa H. Cooper, who has read most of the chapters of this book more than once, and survived. For the inexhaustible support of my family and friends, I am eternally grateful. To Matt, my touchstone, and to Lucy, my inspiration, thank you.

ABBREVIATIONS



- EETS Early English Text Society (o.s., Original Series, e.s., Extra Series, s.s. Supplementary Series)
- MED *The Middle English Dictionary*. Edited by Hans Kurath et al. 13 vols. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1952–2001. Available at: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
- OED *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Edited by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner. 20 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- PL *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris, 1841–65. Reprint Tournhout: Brepols, 1985–88.
- SAC *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*
- SR *The Statutes of the Realm*. Edited by T. E. Tomlins et al. 11 vols. 1810–28. Reprint London: Dawsons, 1963.

INTRODUCTION



Nakid thei wer[e]n fairest on to see;
For whil thei stood in staat off innocence,
Thei hadde off clothyng noon experience.

—John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, speaking of Adam and Eve¹

The “experience” of clothing in late-medieval England, to borrow John Lydgate’s wording, was the experience of change. Clothing, as his *Fall of Princes* (1431–39) reminds us, marked not only Adam and Eve’s radical turn from the static state of grace and innocence—*thei stood in staat*—into the falling, erring, mutable material realm of “deth and pouerte” (658), but also marked the origins of self-generated change in human history, the first instance of “[c]haungyng thestate” (657), of altering the form or circumstance of something from its original condition. A similar point was more recently made by Elaine Scarry, who asserts that Adam and Eve’s fig leaves symbolize “their first cultural act wholly independent of God,” and that they present one example of “the capacity for cultural self-transformation through artifice.”² For Lydgate, however, and for many of the poets that I will discuss in this book, this biblical scene is less about the act of artifice that turned fig leaves into garments than it is about the inherently transformative phenomenon of clothing itself. Lydgate dwells on the issue of changeability in this moment of his text, speaking in rapid succession of Adam and Eve’s “sodeyn chaung” (659), of their “onwar myscheeff” [sudden misfortune] (659), and of their “onhappi transmutacioun” (660) even as he also situates their altered vestimentary status as the symbol and narrative starting point for the larger interconnected history of earthly power and worldly mutability that is the focus of his monumental poem.

Lydgate’s treatment of humanity’s first sartorial event nicely demonstrates the primary subject of this book, which is the capacity of clothing

to organize ideas about cultural change, something that fascinated medieval poets and their audiences. I have chosen as my primary site of study a place and time in which the cultural pressures surrounding changes in clothing were overt: as scholars have shown, the period from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries marked a particularly innovative stage of vestimentary development in Europe, a period whose novel and ever-changing aesthetic sensibilities generated long moralizing castigations by homilists, satire and ridicule from moralists, and the first widespread wave of sumptuary laws that attempted to stabilize individual practices of consumption and appearance. The important cultural phenomenon that Roland Barthes called the “fashion system”—loosely defined as the rapid, systemic change of diverse forms of clothing—has recently been shown to have emerged and thrived in this period, a fact that offers seemingly irrefutable evidence of the important role that clothing played in the cultural formulations of change.³ Moreover, throughout high- and late-medieval Europe, the persistent association of clothing with stylistic novelty and its objects—imported fabrics, embroideries, and colors with ever-changing styles, shapes, and designs—was underscored by the highly symbolic role that particular garments played in transformative events, from the legendary sartorial episodes in the Fall and the Crucifixion and the celebrated rites of religious and secular investiture (and divestiture) to more ordinary material demonstrations of economic prosperity and downfall, socioeconomic and political mobility, and daily practices of consumption and self-fashioning.

As I will illustrate, English writers perceived these contemporary changes in distinctive ways: with a particularized conception of vacillating fashions as a governing national characteristic; with a deep investment in the (Boethian) philosophy of the changeable material world; and with a curiosity about the way emerging practices in vernacular writing, and especially vernacular lyric, might correspond to stylistic innovations in material culture. As they trace the developments of these ideas, the chapters of this book reveal that, despite their associations with frivolity and vanity, clothing and fashion were often understood to be philosophically and phenomenologically significant objects of study, engaging weighty issues of their culture, often under the guise of superficiality and caprice. Through their association with change, I will argue, clothing and fashion became important tropes for exploring the processes of material transience; correspondingly, through its association with clothing, the notion of change in effect became reified as an aesthetic act, an identifiable practice that could be observed, analyzed, and poeticized. To give a sense of the scope of these critical developments, in this introduction I provide two examples of the type of unexpected analytic depth that clothing offers two

very different texts: one an uncharacteristic treatise by the Church patriarch, Tertullian, and the other a virtually forgotten anecdotal lyric by the English poet Chaucer. I will then turn to discussing in detail the current state of scholarship on medieval fashion and the special currency that the topic of vestimentary changeability had in high- and late-medieval England.

THE *PALLIUM* AND THE *PILCHE*: THEORIZING CLOTHING AND CHANGE

Postmodern theorists in a variety of fields have discussed clothing's unique status as one of the most radically innovative forms of material culture, as a material practice whose extraordinary capacity for change gives rise to an equally powerful ability to mediate cultural experience and meaning. Roland Barthes was one of the earliest to theorize this potential in his discussion of the inherent "ambiguity" of fashion's anthropological enterprise: "simultaneously unpredictable and systematic, regular and unknown, aleatory and structured, [Fashion] fantastically conjoins the intelligible without which men could not live and the unpredictability attached to the myth of life."⁴ Cultural theorist Grant McCracken argues that clothing in itself brings both change and continuity, giving form to otherwise volatile historical moments: "clothing can be used as a historical operator which serves not only to reflect changing historical circumstances but also as a device which creates and constitutes this change in cultural terms."⁵ While for McCracken clothing establishes and organizes cultural change, making it visible, palpable, and open for scrutiny or debate, anthropologist Webb Keane describes the change that is effected *by* clothing through what he calls the "unrealized future" of sartorial semiotics—the cultural expectation that clothing *changes* people, and the fact that new clothing "makes possible or inhibits new practices, habits, and intentions."⁶ In clothing historian Gilles Lipovetsky's mind, aesthetic ingenuity in clothing demonstrates the important role that change plays in notions of human autonomy: "fashion attests to the human capacity to change, the ability of men and women to invent new modes of appearance . . . [and] the effort of human beings to make themselves masters of the conditions of their own existence."⁷

Whether in the generic sense of the word "clothing" used by McCracken and Keane, or in regard to the larger system of meaning called "fashion" used by Barthes and Lipovetsky—a distinction of terms that I will revisit later in this introduction—the theoretical value of clothing described by these critics was not lost on early writers. My first textual example can be

found in an unlikely place: the work of the third-century Church father Tertullian. In addition to his oft-cited scathing comments about the unnaturalness of female ornament and attire, Tertullian—who was fascinated, if not, as R. Howard Bloch has suggested, “obsessed” with the moral concerns generated by ornamentation—wrote a treatise about his own attire that made an argument for a natural law of sartorial change.⁸ Finding the need to defend publicly his own sartorial shift from wearing the Roman toga to the Greek philosophers’ *pallium*, a square, simple garment that eventually usurped the toga in Roman usage, Tertullian presented a treatise to the men of Carthage that situated ever-changing fashions within a universal law of change. Tertullian’s attitude in this speech is surprising considering his well-known moralizing position in other texts devoted to clothing. Here, he champions sartorial change. All the world, Tertullian declares, invoking Plato’s theory of forms, is versiform, or shape-changing [totum uersiforme est].⁹ Human changes in clothing style should not be criticized, he argues, but should rather be seen in the context of the world’s celebrated and numerous natural changes, which include vacillations of atmosphere, geography, and vegetation; animals who change their forms, hues, and sexes; and the *translatio* of human power and fortune. Tertullian’s defense of sartorial change as a human practice and a historical process lays the groundwork for later discussions about the importance of clothing as an interpretive lens for understanding human self-knowledge and human history. Pointing out the critical role of clothing changes in various creation myths, for example, he describes in detail Adam and Eve’s vestimentary progression from nakedness at birth to fig leaves and eventually to skins; then, broadening the discussion for his non-Christian listeners, he connects this tale to the mythical origins of clothing in the work of Mercury, Minerva, and Arachne. After defending vestimentary change as an ontological category, Tertullian turns to the everyday experience and local history of the garments in question: not only is the toga, unlike the *pallium*, an unwieldy, uncomfortable, and impractical garment that one throws off as soon as entering one’s house, he declares, but also its elevated association with Roman style disguises its checkered past as the dress of the Pelagians and Etruscans. At the end of the text he declares the *pallium* to have a new, improved philosophical purpose—to adorn Christians: “gaude pallium et exsulta! melior iam te philosophia dignata est ex quo Christianum vestire coepisti” [Be glad, O *pallium*, and exult! Now a better philosophy has considered you worthy, since you began to clothe the Christian].¹⁰

Tertullian’s text nicely demonstrates, through its deconstructive thoroughness and associational breadth, the way culture interpolates symbolic mean-

ing *into* the experience of material objects: what does it *mean* to change “a toga ad pallium”? [from toga to *pallium*], the text asks.¹¹ It means the origin of life, the fall from grace, the law of nature, *translatio imperii*, religious purpose, and a lighter load on one’s shoulders on a hot Carthage day. The multiple registers of meaning associated with dress work together here to establish the unique capabilities of clothing as an object of theoretical study: at once allegorical and material, old and new, public and private, clothing stretches to encompass the overlapping and ever-changing experiences of the body, the intellect, and the soul. By publicly donning the rudimentary garment of the Greek philosophers, Tertullian symbolically strips himself of ornament and its associations, aligning himself, and ultimately all Christians, with the Stoic philosopher who eschews material distractions.¹² The *pallium* was subsequently to become the privileged attire of popes and archbishops and the garment that artists imagined to have dressed Christ and the early patriarchs; as Tertullian puts it, the sight, and even the thought of, the *pallium* makes vices blush.¹³

Yet while Tertullian ostensibly means his self-fashioning to perform sartorial constancy, he also seems to acknowledge that by exchanging his toga for a *pallium* he is following a type of fashion trend. He makes clear that it is not only followers of Philosophy who wear the garment; teachers, doctors, poets, musicians, and “all of liberal studies” [omnis liberalitas studiorum] have also chosen to dress themselves in this way. Tertullian further underscores the paradoxical allure of the *pallium* by drawing attention to the stylistic correlation between rhetorical and sartorial eloquence, and by arguing for the persuasive powers of his clothing: “etsi eloquium quiescat . . . ipse habitus sonat. Sic denique auditur philosophus dum uidetur” [although eloquence is mute . . . this garment resounds. A philosopher, in fact, is *heard* so long as he is *seen*].¹⁴ In this dramatic speech that powerfully and wittily performs a change of attire in front of a live audience—if he did not go so far as to change his garment during this speech, he was surely wearing the *pallium* throughout it—Tertullian effectively adds back rhetorically what he has taken away materially. Rather than removing himself and his garments from the cycles of fashion, his statement codifies and naturalizes human sartorial change and places the *pallium* within that larger system. At the same time, he brings intense focus to the status of the novel vestimentary object itself, demonstrating that even the most plain, simple, and modest garment can still evoke a plethora of cultural associations and interpretive possibilities, often far beyond the local history or social standing of the individual who wears it. Tertullian’s *pallium* makes philosophy fashionable, and his *De Pallio* makes clothing, and changing clothes, philosophical.

A similar curiosity about sartorial change drives my second example. One of his shortest and possibly least-read poems, Chaucer's "Proverbe" offers a preliminary glimpse at how a philosophical English poet imaginatively engaged with the problem of sartorial diversity in the fourteenth century. Even in the mundane, daily use of clothes, this poem suggests, we are always negotiating the conceptual predicaments brought up by vestimentary change. The poem reads, in its entirety:

What shul these clothes thus manyfold,
 Lo this hote somers day?
 After grete hete cometh cold;
 No man caste his pilche away.

Of al this world the large compass
 Yt wil not in myn armes tweyne;
 Who so mochel wol embrace,
 Litel therof he shal distreyne.
 (1–8)¹⁵

These short verses infuse the English preoccupation with abundance and variety in clothing with a clear interest in how material change influences self-knowledge and thus one's knowledge of the world. The blunt material problem posed by the opening question—*what shall be done with so many clothes / on this hot summer day?*—invokes any number of practical dilemmas posed by seasonal clothing such as proper storage, socially appropriate seasonal attire, and physical comfort in a changing climate.¹⁶ The issue of wearing excessive clothing for fashion's sake regardless of season was especially timely when Chaucer was writing. The 1363 sumptuary legislation's withdrawal of the right of any subject to wear fur in the summer months, for example, shows how prevalent such practices were.¹⁷ Read alone, the opening line's evident problematic regarding "manifold" clothing directly engages with the issue of English *varietas vestium* [variety of clothing] a topic that I will discuss in more depth below, and that has been proven to be particularly germane in Chaucer's works. As Laura F. Hodges puts it, in the *Canterbury Tales* Chaucer provides "the widest range (quality and value) of contemporary fabric names in a single English literary work in the Middle Ages."¹⁸ What shall be done with so many clothes, indeed?

Both countering and complementing the initial material concerns of the opening question, the second stanza of Chaucer's short poem invokes the rhythms and lived experiences of material life. The circular movement and

thematic of lines 3 through 8 address the intangible things of life: in the turning of the seasons, the related *abab cdcd* rhyme pattern, and the “compass” of the world encircled in two arms, we are led to contemplate life’s inevitable temporalities, our own nostalgic awareness regarding past lessons learned, and the wholesale optimism of summer giving way to the privation of winter. Layers and quantities of clothing are used as a metaphor for change here, but a change that is not wholly unexpected; one’s outer garment or “pilch” works as yet another subtle reminder of the cyclical nature of our material existence: after warmth and abundance will inevitability come colder, darker times. And as in life, the restrained impulse to “caste . . . away” unwanted garments in the first part of the poem is replaced in the second with the insatiable desire for “so mochel” more. Whether this expansive appetite is purely material—in the medieval sense of *coveitise*—or an abstract ambition, or both, the short poem does not clarify.¹⁹ The overall message, however, clearly regards the conflict between desire and necessity: while one *wants* the world, one *needs* a winter coat.

But the poem is even more complicated. The “pilche,” a common outer jacket made of fur or skins and worn by both men and women in this period, had clear associations with the coat of skins with which Adam and Eve are clothed in Genesis 3:21, as the Latin Vulgate *tunicas pellicias* (from *pellicius*, made of skins) becomes *pilche* in texts such as the Middle English *Story of Genesis and Exodus*.²⁰ Sermonizers disagreed about the ramifications of these garments. While the influential preacher John Bromyard (d. 1352) describes them as an early ideal of sartorial simplicity, a clothing standard—much like the nakedness of Christ on the Cross, he declares—from which people should learn to cast away their own excessively various attire, Chaucer’s later contemporary Robert Rypon claims that the garments of skins given by God to replace the self-styled fig leaves represent the shameful and sinful nature of postlapsarian humanity.²¹ By situating this popular proverb about clothing in relation to the vacillating material world, Chaucer probes both the theoretical implications and the moral parameters of clothing, pointing out the fundamental irreconcilability of the ‘all cover all lose’ message with the material practices of daily life. He insists, much like Tertullian centuries earlier, that we keep in mind the ‘natural’ cycles of clothing usage before criticizing fashion’s excessive variability, and yet he also makes sure that we recognize a paradox about clothing in his culture: that while one might be able to cast away superfluous clothes at the end of a season, one will never be able to remove one’s “pilch,” the material burden of Adam and Eve that is played out over and over in our own vestimentary vacillations.

FASHION AND *VARIETAS VESTIUM* IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

My argument in this book is that clothing has historically provided an important way to index and to comment on forms of cultural change, and that this symbolic function becomes intensified during a period of particularly radical vestimentary changes in high- and late-medieval England. In the previous examples I have tried to demonstrate how theoretically provocative *clothing* was for early writers as a cultural signifier of change; now, because it has historically been so important in the integration of clothing into the thematics of change, I will establish the place of *fashion* as a related but distinct concept in the medieval world.

The scholarly interest in fashion as a cultural system has compelled a provocative yet relatively fluid retreat into history. Since the iconic studies by Thorstein Veblen and Fernand Braudel, fashion has been inextricably linked with the development of consumption, and as the point of origins for consumer economies has lately been pushed further and further back into the modern, early modern, and finally premodern periods, so have the origins of fashion.²² The most vigorous scholarly debate involves the exact period when and place where “fashion” first emerged as a cultural system. While older critical models focused on nineteenth-century France and eighteenth-century England, recent studies argue for earlier and earlier junctures: sixteenth-century England, fifteenth-century Florence, fourteenth-century England, fourteenth-century Burgundy, and, most recently, thirteenth-century France.²³ The vast majority of recent scholarship on medieval costume locates the birth of Western fashion in the virtual revolution of European dress that emerged in and around the 1340s, when the rounded, loose, toga-inspired, less emphatically gendered garments that had been worn for centuries suddenly became tighter, tailored, padded, and variously colored, with fitted sleeves and torsos, conspicuous hip belts and accessories, elongated limbs and pointed hats, dramatically shortened and stuffed doublets for men, and a penchant for slitted and slashed extremities. As one anonymous sermonizer describes it, dress in this period consisted of “dyvers atyre, as of strayt clothes and schorte, and daggede hodes other typpes, chausures dysgysed and y-tyed up streyt in thre stedes, baudrykes and baselardes and crakowes of half a fote longe, harlotes and laddes and other dysgysynges” [diverse attire, as of straight clothes and short, and dagged hoods and other tippets, boots disguised and tied up straight in three places, belts, ornamental daggers, crackows (long pointed shoes) of half a foot long, shoe thongs and other disguisings].²⁴

Recent studies have challenged this scholarly consensus regarding the

fourteenth-century emergence of fashion as phenomenon. Returning to the type of structuralist model of fashion analysis used by Barthes and Baudrillard, for example, Sarah-Grace Heller's *Fashion in Medieval France* persuasively identifies a clear fashion system in thirteenth-century France, a culture that demonstrates the existence of all ten of the author's specialized "criteria" for fashion's existence.²⁵ Heller's is the first book-length literary study to turn its full attention to the problem of 'the birth of fashion' in the Middle Ages, and she discusses the extent to which this subject has been previously skewed by the predominant use of visual, rather than textual, evidence to make historical claims.²⁶ Declaring that "a shift in methodology is in order" for understanding fashion as a cultural phenomenon, Heller calls not only for further analysis of clothing symbolism in literary texts but also for a more concerted effort to understand fashion as a systemic whole rather than as a series of isolated social, material, and economic developments.²⁷ Importantly, even as her meticulous structuralism maps out the codes of medieval fashion as an emergent (twelfth-century) and existing (thirteenth-century) cultural system occurring much earlier than previously thought, Heller proposes an end to misguided scholarly quests for origins, carefully avoiding any claim of her historical finding as a definitive cultural starting point.²⁸

If early literary texts have been undervalued in identifying historical models of ever-changing fashion, the same cannot be said for the influence of fashion studies on medieval literary and cultural studies. The emergence of fashion has served as the backdrop for a rich interdisciplinary discussion about cultural formations of identity in medieval Europe to which literary scholars have substantially added. Claire Sponsler's groundbreaking work on medieval dress and consumption, for example, reveals that the meticulous social stratification of late-medieval English regulatory discourses ironically generated numerous possibilities for using dress as a medium of cultural resistance.²⁹ Susan Crane's study of ritualized courtier performances in England and France makes the discovery that medieval selfhood was often understood to exist in *external* public performances such as costume, rather than in interior consciousness.³⁰ Likewise, E. Jane Burns, in her two substantial studies on dress in twelfth- and thirteenth-century French courtly love literature, finds that fashionable garments often operate against the grain of textual and social expectations, as cultural crossing points that disrupt paradigms regarding internality and externality, gender roles and relations, and East–West interactions.³¹

A common argumentative thread in these generative studies by Sponsler, Crane, and Burns is that medieval clothing symbolism often gives rise to the critically *unexpected*: it offers, respectively, resistance instead of regula-

tion, identity instead of pretense, and disruption instead of categorization. This potential for unexpectedness speaks to clothing's symbiotic relationship with change in this period—to the “unpredictability” that Barthes attributes to the fashion system. As Crane points out, unpredictability was an important part of the consumer culture built around the demand for fashionable clothes; the endless reshaping of clothing silhouettes in the fourteenth century, she states, made “change itself an aspect of consumption.”³² With fashion as either the text or the subtext of most recent critical studies on medieval clothing, the link between dress and changeability appears everywhere within them—from modern definitions of fashion's inherent mutability, to actual changes in clothing color, style, and shape, to the changing social codes that follow changing styles, to the myriad personal and social transformations that medieval vestimentary performances are said to bring about. Yet the cultural association between clothing and change described by medieval writers has not yet generated a study that undertakes the topic in its own regard. My methodological interest in medieval fashion, by contrast, lies precisely in its consummate demonstration of clothing's troping of change, a topic that I trace in this book from late-antique discussions about the changeable material world to late-medieval depictions of changing aesthetic practices more broadly.

In high- and late-medieval England, the ubiquitous discourses about fashion's changeability performed a particular type of cultural work. While moralists and satirists throughout medieval Europe deplored the ‘alien’ nature of new fashions in their midst whether those fashions were in fact of foreign origin or not, in late-medieval England this discourse reached the proportions of a national pastime.³³ Sometimes the foreign fashions blamed were those worn by the French during the Hundred Years War; sometimes they were connected with specific foreign courtiers in the English court during this period, such as those who arrived with Philippa of Hainault when she married Edward III, as I discuss below. In most cases, imitation of foreign fashions served as the incentive for a discussion of England's self-identified vice of *varietas vestium* [variety of clothing], wherein England's sartorial diversity was associated with myriad other kinds of cultural mutability.³⁴ This pervasive narrative about the national penchant for *varietas vestium* is found in late-medieval sermons, chronicles, aristocratic clothing accounts, and poems, and it encompasses both the visual impression of England's diverse aesthetic and the frequency with which that aesthetic changed: fashions were said not only to *look* new, strange, and unstable but also literally to change every year, every week, every day, or even several times a day. Likewise, the deleterious effects of wearing these fashions ranged in intensity from disrupting categories of

social status, to effecting personal misfortune or death, to fulfilling prophecies of national disaster regarding military and economic failings, plague, revolution, or apocalypse.

Andrew Galloway has identified the Benedictine monk Ranulph Higden's popular chronicle of English history, the *Polychronicon* (1330s–40s), as a major source text for many circulating ideas regarding English *varietas vestium* as a national feature.³⁵ Higden's influential discussion of English diversity in dress, Galloway argues, helped to create the trope of English social instability as "a set feature of national ideology," ensuring that the stereotype of reckless, variable Englishmen who (in Higden's words) "squeamishly despise their own things, and commend those of others," and who "freely transfigure themselves into what pertains to others" became a mark of national self-consciousness.³⁶ We can see this impulse when English sermonizers denounce the long-term evolution of clothing through the ages, decrying the change from Adam and Eve's tunics of skins to the increasingly luxurious and foreign contemporary garments—"diversely decorated," in Robert Rypon's words, "in an infinite variety of ways."³⁷ English chroniclers connected England's *varietas vestium* to more recent historical events. A representative example can be seen in John of Reading's entry for 1344 in his *Chronica*, which (written in hindsight in 1366–68) blames English mutability in dress on Philippa of Hainault's influence and also positions this mutability as the cause for the plague of 1348–49:

Anglici tum insaniae alienigenarum adhaerentes velut de adventu Hannoniensium, annis quasi xviii praeelapsis, annuatim varias deformitates vestium mutantes, longorum largorumque indumentorum antiqua honestate deserta, vestibis curtis, strictis, frustratis, scissis, omni parte laqueatis, corrigiatis, botonatis cum manicis ac tipeitis supertunicarum et caputiarum nimis pendulis, tortoribus et, ut verius dicam, daemonibus tam indumentis quam calciamentis similiores quam hominibus. Et si clerici seu religiosi aliquibus dictorum usi sunt, non regulares sed irregulares judicentur. Mulieres enim in praedictis et aliis curiosius fluxerunt, adeo stricte vestitae, ut ad anos celandos caudas vulpinas vestibis inferius consutas penderent. Quorum forte superbia futuris praetendit infortunia.

[Ever since the arrival of the Hainaulters about eighteen years ago the English have been madly following outlandish ways, changing their deformed varieties of clothing yearly. They have abandoned the old, decent style of long, full garments for clothes which are short, tight, impractical, slashed, every part laced, strapped or buttoned up, with the sleeves of the

gowns and the tippets of the hoods hanging down to absurd lengths, so that, if truth be told, their clothes and footwear make them look more like torturers, or even demons, than men. Clerics and other religious adopted the same fashions, and should be considered not “regulars,” but “irregulars.” Women flowed with the tides of fashion in this and other things even more eagerly, wearing clothes that were so tight that they wore a fox tail hanging down inside their skirts at the back, to hide their asses. The sin of pride manifested in this way must surely bring down misfortune in the future.]³⁸

Like the Latin chroniclers, vernacular writers also used specific keywords concerning English sartorial imitation, mutability, and variety and their moral implications: clothing is above all else *dyvers*, a word around which a plethora of synonyms and related words, such as *desgysede*, *countrefete*, *excessyf*, and *manifold* are usually clustered.³⁹ As we see in the later *Brut* chronicle, which echoes Reading’s almost word for word, *varietas vestium* turns into England’s “diuers schappis”: “þey [the English] ordeyned and chaungyd ham euery zere diuers schappis of disgynges of cloping.”⁴⁰

As the growing vocabulary depicting vestimentary change in late-medieval England attests, the culture of change encompassing English clothing in this period also took root at the level of the English language itself. Most significantly, and despite earlier studies that state the contrary, the English term “fashion” as a word meaning rapidly changing dress clearly existed in fourteenth-century England. A satirical poem dated to 1380 on manners and costume that I discuss in depth in chapter 5, for example, describes the “newe facoun” (alternate spelling, “newe fascion”) of the English people in this period as not only “now shorte and now longe” but, like its wearers, “now is here, now goon.”⁴¹ Also captured in this important linguistic moment in England is evidence of the larger conceptual connection between clothing and change that I address in this book, as seen in the usage of the Middle English words “chaunge” and “chaungen”: for a person to “change,” as we say in modern colloquial English, using a phrase that emerges in the fifteenth century, meant then, as it does now, “to change clothes.”⁴²

England’s self-perpetuating reputation for sartorial imitation, appropriation, variety, and mutability serves as the backdrop for the arguments that I make in this book. Medieval writers who treated the subject of clothing during the rise of the fashion system had to contend not only with the capricious spectacle of novelty that they witnessed around themselves—evidence of new technologies, new tailoring, new silhouettes, shapes, fabrics, and terms, all of which had the potential to change faster than the texts describing them could be written and copied—but also with a cultural tradition telling them that

clothing's inherent changeability was a cipher for more important questions about the instability of English identity, and of human existence in the material world more generally. The trope of the Englishman consumed with his own "diuers schappis" provided one way of inquiring into the myriad workings of cultural change. Its importance is suggested not only by its prevalence in medieval culture but also by its historical staying power, as it went on to become a controlling trope in the early modern period, where the stereotype took on new and equally fascinating cultural resonances.⁴³

THIS BOOK'S DESIGN

Much of this book examines the trope of change within literary descriptions of contemporary clothing that were either written by or read by medieval English subjects. It begins, however, with a somewhat inverted critical approach, which is to examine the trope of *clothing* in the source text that represents that culture's most ubiquitous theory of *change*. Chapter 1 effectively positions the sartorial symbolism of Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* as a type of textual prehistory to medieval English notions of sartorial changeability, suggesting that the conceptual framework within which later writers understood the phenomenon of fashion already existed in late-antique discourses about the changeable material world. The *Consolatio* begins with a philosophical question similar to Tertullian's question about his *pallium*, albeit in a very different context: what does it mean, the text asks, to be suddenly stripped of all one's material goods, to change from wearing the robe of a *magister officiorum* to that of a prisoner under penalty of death? Boethius's influential book, I argue, implicitly presents its most crucial argument in sartorial terms: worldly changeability is both symbolized by and experienced through Fortune's infamous manipulation of her subjects' attire. Unlike Tertullian, Boethius does not focus on the social history and context of his change in dress, but rather uses the abstract philosophical connection between clothing and being—inherited from the Aristotelian concept of the *habitus*—to structure more broadly his discussion of human happiness in the face of material mutability.

In chapter 2 I argue that writers throughout high- and late-medieval Europe created in Boethius an authority for the moral and philosophical questions surrounding the use of dress and ornamentation in daily life, and created in Fortune, his most famous character, an icon for myriad explorations and reimaginings of fashion as a purveyor of change. I draw attention to a little-known text from the thirteenth century, *De disciplina scholarium*

[On the Training of Scholars], which was attributed to Boethius and which was used by the Dominican friar Nicholas Trevet in his influential early-fourteenth-century commentary on the *Consolatio*, to analyze Boethius's understanding of luxury ornament in general and self-fashioning in particular. I also discuss how, in a parallel development, writers in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France and in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England used Fortune's association with fashion to explore the connection between self-fashioning and free will. When writers such as Jean de Meun, Chaucer, Lydgate, and Charles d'Orléans associate Fortune with the most fashionable garments of the day and ascribe to her control over the nuances of style and novelty, they also, I argue, begin to scrutinize the experience of fashion as a mechanism of self-control, and the corresponding ability of the fashionable to take charge of their own material destinies.

Chapter 3 returns to the thirteenth century to begin examining other paradigms of vestimentary change—in this case, the contentious subjects of fashion and self-fashioning in ecclesiastical dress. One important garment, the episcopal *capa* (cape or cope), came under the scrutiny of two very different kinds of texts, a monumental liturgical treatise (William Durand's *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, or *Rationale for the Divine Offices*), and a little-known goliardic lyric called "Song upon the Tailors." These texts address a growing problem at the heart of contemporary Church attire: how the changing fashion of actual garments worn by the clergy no longer accorded with the biblical instructions that gave those ecclesiastical garments their authority. While Durand attends to this problem by theorizing and categorizing the types of change made available to him through allegorical exposition, the anonymous satirical poet turns instead to the larger culture of change he sees in his immediate sociopolitical context. Parodying both the biblical trope of God as a tailor and the stasis of Old Testament law, the sartorial "law of metamorphosis" presented by this poet compares the tailor's godlike ability to sartorially transform bodies and subjectivities with the tremendous vesting power of the bishop, who transforms his subjects through practices of investiture or divestiture, and also transforms himself through the ritualized donning of sacred—although fashionable—attire. In this way changes in clothing once again frame questions of one's own material destiny in the face of divine design.

Turning to one of the most popular tales of the fourteenth century, chapter 4 examines the moralized rhetoric of vestimentary change that underlies Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* and *Envoy*. In the sartorially challenged figure of Griselda resides a clerkly comment on the heated debates of the day with respect to female consumption, ownership, and attire. Chaucer's version of

the tale explicitly accentuates its material context: while Griselda's stoicism reads like a Boethian manual on how to endure the fluctuations of Fortune's goods, for instance, her quiescent antimaterialism is challenged by the aggressive dressing and spending habits of the *Envoy's* contemporary "arch wives," and by the Clerk's own vestimentary and rhetorical frugality, which betrays an excessiveness equal to the ornament that he shuns. This chapter moves the provocative subject of sartorial mutability from the realm of spiritual order to that of socioeconomic development, mapping out the Clerk's strategy of associating aesthetic novelty with the mercantile *nouveaux riches*.

My final chapter examines the revolutionary ethos of change represented by the medieval English *galaunt*. This critically neglected figure of fashion epitomizes English *varietas vestium*, encapsulating in his very name the imitation of French fashions at the heart of that national trait. A parody of English mutability in dress, the medieval galaunt's ever-changing foreign fashions, stuffed codpieces, and empty pockets appear to mark him as a stock figure of mirth and moral depravity. A look at the evolution of this figure as a literary trope, however, demonstrates his profound ability to mediate the cultural experience of aesthetic turmoil. The galaunt's celebration of aesthetic upheaval organizes ideas about sociopolitical upheaval; his changing fashions are repeatedly linked with a mysterious prophecy about the future downfall of England, and emerge in association with two violent episodes of insurrection—in the fourteenth century, the Uprising of 1381, and in the fifteenth century, the Jack Cade rebellion. The late-medieval impulse to historicize this figure, I argue, reframes the galaunt as an "event," a phenomenon of historical consequence that lingers in the workings of both cultural memory and poetic aesthetics.

Together, these chapters uncover two main categories of cultural change. The first type concerns the phenomenological meaning of clothing symbolism in high- and late-medieval culture, its tendency to reveal what Lydgate, to return to the epigraph of this introduction, calls the "experience" of clothing. Many of the texts that I explore in these chapters use change and variety in clothing to reveal and examine the mundane structures and patterns of lived experience, whether daily routines of dressing and undressing; seasonal changes in attire; social mobility upward or downward; practices of consumption, possession, and loss; or changes of style and appearance. Writers also frequently depict the experience of change through incessant rhythms and cycles of clothing vacillations, a literary-cultural phenomenon that Barthes calls the "endless garment": whether falling, rising, turning, cycling, mutating, metamorphosing, or shape-shifting, the garments described by medieval writers and explored in this book connote a sense of inexhaustible novelty

and variation.⁴⁴ Part of my argument, therefore, is that these recurring patterns of vestimentary meaning manifest a heightened awareness of the mutable material world, allowing medieval writers and readers to actively engage with the relationship between their own changeability and that of the world around them. In the same way that Fortune's wheel provided a rhythmic pattern through which to understand the highs and lows of material life, I argue, so the daily stripping and donning of garments—and the associated cycles of quickly changing fashions—offered a convenient, easily accessible trope for the constitutive experience of material acquisition, ownership, and loss.

A second, related, category of change that I explore here is that of poetic aesthetics. Chaucer's "Proverbe," which I discuss above, comments on aesthetic excess through its relative absence of poetic ornament: the poem is manifestly spare, with its extreme brevity, regular rhyme scheme, short lines, and dominance of unisyllabic words (the key term "manyfold" [many and various] in line 1 is, appropriately, the only word longer than two syllables). Several of the texts in this book display similar aesthetic strategies, discussing clothing and other material goods in ways that overtly resist engaging the poetic practices (and pleasures) of excessive ornamental imagery or technical detail. Other poems that I consider take the opposite approach and instead mimic the mannered artifice of their fashionable subjects by, for example, using excessive lists of fashion terms or descriptions, by including Frenchified vocabulary that echoes the English imitation of French fashions, by employing acrostics and other highly ornamental poetic forms to convey a self-conscious aesthetic style, or by writing the text in macaronic and alternating mixed-language poetic forms that perform verbally and even visually the diverse and transitory nature of the clothes they describe. Together these poems illustrate a growing interest in the aesthetics of change, and in presenting change as an aesthetic event or action that can be observed, examined, and practiced through literary means. Through a wide range of genres and time periods, therefore, the texts in these chapters tell a surprisingly consistent story, which is that the literary trope of vestimentary change stages powerful questions about the *experience* of the changeable material world, and that these questions are often presented through variable and hybrid literary forms which themselves recreate the material and stylistic changeability that is also their subject.

ONE

Fortune's Habits

BOETHIAN LESSONS ON CLOTHING AND BEING



Et ego quidem bonis omnibus pulsus . . .

[And well, here am I, stripped of all my possessions . . .]

—Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae*¹

Local spectators attending the morality play *Bien Advisé et Mal Advisé* in Rennes, Brittany, in 1439 would have beheld the dramatic introduction of four kings costumed in different stages of wealth and status and named, respectively, Regnabo, Regno, Regnavi, and Sine regno: I shall reign, I reign, I have reigned, I am without reign. After watching the kings assume their appropriate positions on a rather sophisticated mechanical stage version of Fortune's wheel, they would have seen the (most likely male) actor playing Lady Fortune deliver the following lines:

Je vois monstrer ma laide face
A ce galant qui est la hault.
Il cuide que soie endormie . . .
Et veult tous mes biens recevoir.

[I will show my ugly face / To that gallant who is up high; / He expects
that I should have fallen asleep . . . / And desires to receive all my goods.]²

According to the stage directions Fortune would subsequently strip the man at the top of the wheel and look at him “with her terrible face” (Adonc le despoille et le regar[de] a terrible face), after which she would turn the prop

wheel one quarter turn and invest the next king at the top—Regnabo—with the spoils taken from the first. After watching this cycle of stripping and turning performed four times, and hearing a variety of theatrical speeches in between, the audience would have ultimately seen the two allegedly “unfortunate” kings (Regnavi and Sine regno) get off the wheel, confess, and go to heaven, and the two “fortunate” kings (Regnabo and Regno) stay on the wheel, only to be murdered at Fortune’s command and sent to the pits of hell.

This dramatized performance of the highly popular medieval conceit of Fortune’s wheel captures brilliantly the essence of Fortune’s powers. If you desire to receive “all her goods” then you will find yourself, one day when you least expect it, utterly and completely dispossessed. But that is not all: you will continue to desire her goods—will continue to ride at the whim of the turning wheel—long after learning of its instability, and long after experiencing the loss that, according to Fortune, inevitably follows any gain. As a symbol of the linked trajectories of rising and falling symbolic capital and social status, the motif of Fortune’s spinning wheel offered medieval culture a valuable vehicle through which to explore both the material and ethical role of goods in society. In its most basic articulation the lesson of the goddess Fortune teaches that the cultural experience of change is systemically rooted in the desire for, attachment to, and power and status bestowed by material goods. In both this chapter and in the following one, I will examine Fortune’s clothing as her material good *par excellence*, arguing not only for its importance in historical depictions of the goddess and the cultural change she embodies, but also for its importance to the topic of dress itself as a literary trope and a cultural phenomenon—as both a marker for and mediator of the medieval subject’s experience of material change.

As the example above illustrates, Fortune’s stripping of her subjects is a crucial aspect of the event that signifies her change of favors: before she ever turns the wheel she must perform a twofold stripping away: first despoiling the gallant of his clothing and then revealing her own “ugly” face—a gesture that materializes the “ugly truth” behind her gifts.³ Moreover, a third instance of sartorial revelation has also been performed, which is that Fortune’s unmasking points to the open secret of the cross-dressed actor playing Fortune, whose masculine features would greatly enhance both the humor and uncanniness of her changed countenance. While Fortune’s wheel symbolizes the abstract, unrelenting *structure* of material change in the world, her power over changes in clothing, both that of her subjects and herself (which, as I will discuss in chapter 2, changes dramatically as the Middle Ages progress), personalizes and familiarizes material changeability, drawing new atten-

tion to a medium that every reader and audience member must interact with numerous times a day. Vestimentary revelation of the type performed by Fortune in *Bien Advisé et Mal Advisé* has traditionally been understood through the medieval notion of aesthetic integument—that is, the literary practice of allegorical covering and uncovering through which philosophical truth is imagined to be progressively discovered.⁴ Considering Fortune's role in the medieval understanding of material goods, however, it seems equally important to read the vestimentary discourses associated with her figure for their material implications—that is, for their relation to material culture as well as to the notion of materiality itself. As I discussed in my introduction, the symbolic function of clothing spans the practical and the speculative. While on the one hand clothing highlights the historicity of a subject according to categories of time, place, gender, race, and socioeconomic situation, it also speaks to larger ontological and metaphysical questions about the central role material objects play in human experience and self-understanding. This dialectic resonates strikingly in the medieval myth of Fortune, in which changes of clothing stand in both for mundane, personal material gains and losses and for the randomness of all earthly, material power.

As an early step in my discussion of clothing and change, this chapter offers a reading of what might be considered the root text for Western medieval ideas about Fortune's changing goods as well as about the relationship between mundane and metaphysical goods. Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* (c. 525) situates its famous protagonist in the paralyzing grip of Fortune's cycle of having and losing; its basic purpose is to help the poet-protagonist and reader to understand and then escape the lure of Fortune's wheel of goods.⁵ Because the frame of Boethius's book is so familiar to readers of medieval literature, it is easy to forget that the primary medium for this process of understanding is vestimentary: as the epigraph to this chapter suggests, the *Consolatio* is, first and foremost, a book about a man literally stripped of his possessions. This is the state in which we find the protagonist at the beginning of Boethius's text: despoiled, imprisoned, and exiled, he laments his recent change of fortunes, change of appearance, and even change of attire. While the remaining books of the *Consolatio* are ostensibly meant to lead the protagonist's thoughts away from his altered material condition, this condition, and the vestimentary tropes that sustain it, as I will discuss in depth below, inherently provide the circumstance, the subject, and the impetus for Boethius's literary and philosophical project. To give a brief outline of the text's development: the allegorical figure of Philosophy suddenly appears to the protagonist shortly after his opening elegiac poem in Book I, stating that she must detach him from the false goods he mourns and

lead him toward a more metaphysical good (the *summum bonum* or supreme Good of God, we later learn). In Book II, Philosophy describes Fortune's changeability and her goods, rhetorically positioning herself as Fortune to argue against the protagonist's bitter complaints, and identifying friendship alone as the counteragent to worldly goods. In Book III, Philosophy discusses the nature of true happiness, in part by describing once again the false goods that must be rejected in order to find the one true good. In Book IV, Philosophy addresses the nature of evil and the larger question of Fortune's chaotic changeability in the face of unchangeable divine order (divine providence). In Book V, the final book, Philosophy addresses the relationship of human free will to divine providence. Free will, she says, is restricted by the things of the world; the more the soul is tied to worldly goods, the more imprisoned and shackled it becomes.

This simplified outline of the *Consolatio* makes evident the extent to which the worldly things that were stripped from the protagonist prior to the text's narrative are a constant concern in the dialogues between Philosophy and the protagonist. They are so ever-present, in fact, that recent scholars have come to doubt the ultimate efficacy of Philosophy's teachings, preferring to see the *Consolatio* for its failed attempt at material transcendence, rather than for the successful philosophical journey toward speculative knowledge that it outlines for itself.⁶ In examining the vestimentary discourses associated with Fortune's goods in the *Consolatio*, this chapter means to take up one of the more prominent examples of Boethius's interest in objects and things within his larger and incomparably influential discussion of material changeability. I argue, most basically, that in the symbolic field of the *Consolatio*, images of clothing and ornament mediate the protagonist's experience of material change and in the process help him conceptualize his experience of and relationship to material goods. Because vestimentary goods in many ways come to represent all of Fortune's goods in this text, they become a key element of Boethius's larger methodology of examining and turning away from inherently changeable material things, a method that implicitly ties an individual's process of knowledge to his or her attentiveness to habitual material practices. Ultimately, Boethius's text suggests, the true gift offered by material goods is that they carry within them the ability to effect immaterial realization through the experience of material loss.

Critics of the *Consolatio* have tended to focus on the text's epistemologies of philosophy and literature, largely neglecting the formative role that material goods themselves play in the logic of the text. To speak of Boethius's interest in "things" is usually to engage his well-established interest in the metaphysical problem of universals, a topic that was introduced into

high- and late-medieval culture by Boethius's own translations of and commentaries on Aristotle and his Neoplatonic commentator, Porphyry. Aspects of this topic do intersect in important ways with the discourses on material goods that I examine; in particular, I will discuss how Boethius's use of the term *habitus* to describe his protagonist's clothing in the *Consolatio* invites comparison with his earlier translation of Aristotle's concept of *habitus* in the *Categories*. My larger endeavor in this chapter, however, lies more clearly in studying how Boethius's text investigates the practical objects of material culture and their effect on human behavior and self-knowledge, rather than the philosophical classifications of the abstract qualities of those objects. In Boethius's text, I argue, the trope of stripping and adorning delineates a particular cyclical human habit of thought and practice regarding the human accumulation of and attachment to material goods, one that constructs the self in terms of its embodied acquisition of external goods and that experiments with the interrelated concepts of having, wearing, and being (from Latin *habere*: to have, to wear, to be). My analysis here relies on postmodern theories of objects as well as on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus*, a concept that is related in interesting ways to Boethius's earlier use of the term and that helps to explain how human experiences of change and accident are structured and determined by cultural factors, especially in a class-based society such as the one represented by Fortune.

Implicit in my argument is the conviction that Boethius's curiosity about adornment as a fundamental manifestation of Fortune's changeable goods profoundly influenced and informed literary treatments of clothing in high- and late-medieval culture. As I will discuss in chapter 2, vernacular writers in these periods were especially fascinated by the *Consolatio*'s practical lessons about the mutability of material goods, and they inherited from Boethius a particular (vestimentary) way of conceptualizing their relationship with those goods. By first spending the time to examine Boethius's *Consolatio* in his own milieu, I am deferring for the moment the issue of precise literary borrowing of that text, whose meaning was interceded by later commentaries, translations, and Latin editions, so that I can explore how Boethius transformed the matter of clothing as he found it in his own culture. In his use of Fortune, I demonstrate, Boethius takes a recognized classical trope for transience and materialism and invests it with a much broader network of images and meanings, so that experiences of personal alteration, of material possession and loss, of large social change, and even of the individual's place in divine order can be understood through the singular image of the goods-*qua*-clothing that Fortune strips off the poet-protagonist's back. Together, the main motifs that I will now examine—Fortune's ever-turning wheel, the

protagonist's lost garment, Philosophy's allegorical robe, and the 'design' of divine Providence—present the trope of changing clothing as one way to examine the vexed question of the human condition in the material world.

THE WHEEL OF MATERIAL GOODS

Fortune's iconic ever-turning wheel is the most overt symbol of the human experience of material goods in Boethius's text, juxtaposing as it does the unrelenting pace of human acquisitiveness with the inherent impermanence of worldly things. In Fortune's words (via Philosophy):

Nos ad constantiam nostris moribus alienam inexplata hominum cupiditas alligabit? Haec nostra uis est, hunc continuum ludum ludimus: rotam uolubili orbe uersamus, infima summis, summa infimis mutare gaudemus.

[Shall I, then, permit man's insatiable cupidity to tie me down to a sameness alien to my habits? Here is the source of my power, the game I always play: I spin my wheel and find pleasure in raising the low to a high place and lowering those who were on top.]⁷

Fortune's wheel is so often connected in medieval culture to the gains and losses of kings and rulers—those who have the most to lose—that we might lose touch with the notion that her wheel in fact pertains to all people: that is, that it relates not just to having *a lot*, but also, and more broadly, to the notion of *having* itself. While Chaucer, for example, glosses his translation of this passage in his *Boece* with an introduction of the notion of tragedy, his definition of the term is decidedly utilitarian: he writes (via Trevet): “[t]ragedye is to seyn a dite of a prosperite for a tyme, that endeth in wrecchidnesse.”⁸ On a fundamental level the cycle depicted by Fortune's wheel reflects the experience of what D. Vance Smith calls in another context the “tragedy of possession,” that is, the unnerving and often destabilizing circumstances brought forth by acquiring, losing, exchanging, desiring, or just plain “trying to make sense of” material possession.⁹ The fluctuations of having or losing possessions had concrete sociopolitical manifestations, of course, especially, as I will discuss in chapter 2, in the context of an emerging consumer culture that coincided with the burgeoning mercantile economies and new social mobility of high- and late-medieval Europe. What interests me here, however, is the way Fortune's iconography taps into a robust ancient and late-antique network of cultural associations linking the human condi-

tion and the cycle of desire for and attachment to material goods. A look at this tradition suggests that the motion of the wheel represents not only the fluctuations of one's literal holdings but also the slippery experience of living in a culture whose social and even spiritual operations and narratives are rooted unequivocally in cyclical economies of gain and loss, and change and exchange.

The wheel of Fortune has early ties to the Orphic wheel, a Greek symbol related to the doctrine of metempsychosis, or reincarnation, in which the human soul is imagined as wandering back and forth from a higher existence to a lower one, over and over, as if on a turning wheel.¹⁰ Plato connects the cycle of metempsychosis to the corruptibility of matter itself; the immortal soul succumbs to the cycle of rebirth by literally falling from the divine realm to earth, where it is subjected to the vicissitudes of matter and "perpetually undergoes all sorts of changes."¹¹ Once reborn in a material body, the soul's level of involvement with and attachment to material objects of pleasure or pain ensures the degree of its fusion with that body—its literal incorporation—and also the degree of its longing for "the physical" (the material) in its next life and next cycle on the wheel.¹² Neoplatonists likewise taught that all things progress in a circular movement of creation from and return to the Source, the One, and the Good; the more the soul serves the passions of the body and the imperfect matter of the world, the more isolated it becomes from this Good.¹³ Again and again this cyclical nature of the relation between subject and object emerges in the historical study of humankind's participation with its external and material environment: in Hegelian philosophy, consciousness stems from the cycles of creation and alienation by which humans form and then interact with the world around them;¹⁴ in Lacanian psychoanalysis this connection is discussed in terms of the Thing, that primordial lost object that is not only the site of desire but also the site of the drives—especially the death drive, as Slavoj Žižek reminds us, the recurring desire to return to an original, inorganic state—which forever circle around the object, never to be satisfied.¹⁵ More recently the iconography of the Eastern wheel of life—often thought of as a source for later Western versions—has been read as a model for understanding consumer cycles and especially the cycle of consumer desire.¹⁶

As one of the guiding symbols in the *Consolatio* through which human beings are to understand their relationship to the material world around them, Boethius's trope of Fortune's wheel engages many of these same elements. For instance, the pining, self-pitying state in which the protagonist first appears epitomizes the notion of the (Neo)Platonic soul weighed down by the mortal body's material, worldly attachments. When we first meet

the protagonist Boethius in the opening verse of the *Consolatio* he is deeply invested in longing for his own death. Partway into the first poem, however, we see that this condition is in fact merely an extension of his longing for the former goods (including a youthful body) that he enjoyed while in Fortune's good graces and has since lost:

Dum leuibus male fida bonis fortuna faueret
 paene caput tristis merserat hora meum;
 Nunc quia fallacem mutauit nubila uultum
 protrahit ingratas impia uita moras.

[The sad hour that nearly drowned me came just at the time that faithless Fortune favored me with her worthless gifts. Now that she has clouded her deceitful face, my accursed life seems to go on endlessly.]¹⁷

While the text starts with Fortune's role in this most immediately material of human cycles of having and losing—that is, the deterioration and death of the mortal body—it later compares Fortune's unceasing material changes with humankind's large-scale cyclical appetite for material things. When Philosophy famously ventriloquizes Fortune's voice to illustrate the goddess's rhetorical positioning, for example, she repeatedly makes clear that it is man's "insatiable greed," his chronic "thirst for possessions," that necessitates the constancy—in the form of constant gifts—so often demanded from the goddess. Regardless of the number or type of gift, Fortune complains, new desires for possessions always reoccur:

sed quaesita uorans saeua rapacitas
 alios pandit hiatus.
 Quae iam praecipitem frena cupidinem
 certo fine retentent,
 largis cum potius muneribus fluens
 sitis ardescit habendi?
 Numquam diues agit qui trepidus gemens
 sese credit egentem.

[Ravenous greed would devour everything and then discover other wants. No bridle can restrain man's disordered desires within reasonable bounds. Even when he is filled with great favors, he burns with thirst for more. No man can be rich who cries fearfully and considers himself to be poor.]¹⁸

Boethius's original question about the randomness of fate is thus turned into an assessment of human desire in response to the circulation of goods; how different, the protagonist seems to be asked, is Fortune's changeable, fickle wheel from your own random yet recurring desires? Underlying this question is the suggestion—reiterated throughout this text—that wealth is a state of being rather than having; that a rich man, and a happy man, is one who perceives himself as such.

The extent to which the protagonist Boethius (along with humankind in general) misunderstands and displaces his own cycles of longing for material goods and the power and status they bring is thus the starting point and foundation of the early books of the *Consolatio*, and the theme continues throughout the second half of the work, albeit in a different direction and tenor. Whereas in the earlier, 'physical' books of the *Consolatio*, as I have just described, Philosophy challenges the protagonist's notion of Fortune's wheel by associating it with his own corresponding cycles of bodily deterioration and consumer desire, in the later, more 'metaphysical' books, she effectively replaces the notion of Fortune's wheel altogether with another image of a turning wheel said to steer human experience. The human longing for artificial material goods, she explains, is merely a misguided attempt to satiate the natural human longing for true Good, which manifests itself as a circular return to one's origins:

Repetunt proprios quaeque recursus
redituque suo singula gaudent
nec manet ulli traditus ordo
nisi quod fini iunxerit ortum
stabilemque sui fecerit orbem.

[Thus all things seek again their proper courses, and rejoice when they return to them. The only stable order in things is that which connects the beginning to the end and keeps itself on a steady course.]¹⁹

This circular path correlates to the Platonic cycle of the soul; for as Philosophy later explains more directly, it is also the path to God.²⁰ The effect of this shift in the *Consolatio*'s use of wheel symbolism is to reveal a series of basic truths using the notion of Fortune's wheel: that humans feel desire, that desire is recurring and recursive; that humans displace their desire for the *summum bonum* onto artificial goods, and that in so doing they mistakenly believe that their fates are controlled by the wheel of chance when they are in

fact controlled by their own desire for God and the recurring movement of their souls toward God. As Boethius makes clear even in his rhyme scheme in the passage quoted above, the wheel, or *orbis*, of things is—contrary to the popular notions of the goddess Fortune—inherently connected to both divine order (*ordo*) and beginnings (*ortus*).

I have been arguing that Boethius's wheel imagery in the *Consolatio* organizes a particular narrative about the human relationship with and perception of material goods, and that it does this not only in its symbolic function as a figure for worldly changeability but also in Boethius's development of the wheel imagery as a guiding trope throughout his text. While my primary interest lies in examining how this imagery facilitates the other major symbolic feature of Fortune's wheel, her power over clothing, to which I will now turn, it is important to note that the association between the cycles of matter and the cycles of longing that I describe here can be found throughout the Middle Ages. For while medieval Christian culture did not, barring a few notable exceptions, subscribe to the Platonic worldview of 'eternal return' in which the transmigration of souls played such a key role, it did use the symbol of the wheel in myriad ways to explore the cyclical nature of human involvement with the transient material world—both the literal material body and the longing that comes with it.²¹ This can be seen in the types of wheel iconography that were most clearly associated with Fortune's wheel, such as the aforementioned wheel of life and the rose window, each of which has been shown to use the image of the wheel to explore on the one hand the progression of man toward death and on the other the futility of his grasping for worldly power and goods.²² Moreover, as the wheel of Fortune became more Christianized—in the sense that its vacillations became more often linked to human vices than to random fate—it more implicitly informed (and was informed by) other genres of wheels concerned with the cycle of material desires, including the various wheels of vices and of the cardinal sins evoked by moralists, the interlinked wheels of desire and temperance, and especially the wheel of worldly concupiscence.²³

BOETHIUS'S *HABITUS*

While Boethius's *Consolatio* uses wheel iconography to reveal the cyclical movement of goods in the world and of corresponding human desires, it uses clothing and ornament to analyze the material medium of those changing goods and the process of human attachment to them. Boethius was not the first writer to imagine Fortune's process of worldly changeability in terms of

vestimentary possession and dispossession, but he changed this trope in crucial ways. Lucian's *Menippus*, a work known to have influenced the *Consolatio*, provides one of the earliest and most comprehensive portraits of Fortune's vestimentary powers of transformation. The text narrates the main character's journey into Hades, during which Menippus, struck by the disturbing indistinguishability of human skeletons stripped of their trappings, states the following:

[I]t seemed to me that human life is like a long pageant, and that all its trappings are supplied and distributed by Fortune, who arrays the participants in various costumes of many colors . . . And often, in the very midst of the pageant, she exchanges the costumes of several players; instead of allowing them to finish the pageant in the parts that had been assigned to them, she re-apparels them, forcing Croesus to assume the dress of a slave and captive, and shifting Maeandrius, who formerly paraded among the servants, into the imperial habit of Polycrates . . . Some however, are so ungrateful that when Fortune appears to them and asks for her trappings back, they are vexed and indignant, as if they were being robbed of their own property, instead of giving back what they had borrowed for a little time.²⁴

Lucian's text imagines clothing as a type of spectacular ornament that is the primary tool through which Fortune achieves her powers of alteration. He presents three crucial aspects of clothing's power as an agent of change which are later echoed by medieval writers: first and foremost, he highlights its superior ability to enact social status, so that king and slave, master and servant, need only to trade costumes in order to experience a reversal of fortunes ("I suppose that the show must needs be diversified," Menippus quips).²⁵ Second, he illustrates its role as property—of a most personal kind—that best represents the inherent human misunderstanding of goods as permanent fixtures of the self (and the corresponding trauma when such permanence is lost).²⁶ Third, by having Menippus speak the above words when he observes, Hamlet-like, the anonymity of the human skeleton, Lucian underscores the symbolic importance of clothing to understanding the cycle of life and death.²⁷ Thus, like the symbolism of Fortune's wheel, which conflates the human cycle of life with the human desire for possessions, Fortune's costumes themselves represent not merely the goods of the world bestowed on individuals and the symbolic capital those goods bring, but also a cultural rhythm of material gaining and losing, of possession and dispossession, that is intimately associated with the cycle of life and death.

Boethius's influential version of the same image keeps Lucian's association of Fortune's garments with property ownership and the cycle of life, but downplays the main theme of the sartorial performance of social status, focusing instead on the rich imagistic potential of Fortune's ornamental gifts in relation to the trope of purity and nakedness. Boethius's Fortune ('played' by Philosophy) describes her goods as a type of nourishing adornment that she provided the naked and helpless protagonist upon his birth, and that she now decides to take back:

Cum te matris utero produxit, nudum rebus omnibus inopemque suscepi,
meis opibus foui et, quod te nunc impatientem nostri facit, fauore prona
indulgentius educaui, omnium quae mei iuris sunt affluentia et splendore
circumdedi. Nunc mihi retrahere manum libet.

[When Nature produced you from your mother's womb, I found you naked and lacking in everything. I nourished you with my abundant gifts, and, being inclined to favor you (an attitude which you now seem to hold against me), I endowed you with all the affluence and splendor in my power. Now it pleases me to withdraw my favor.]²⁸

Here Fortune's gifts are situated more clearly in relation to cultural, Stoic-influenced notions of excess and artifice: her gifts are not merely costumes that might be randomly exchanged at any point during the drama of life, but constitute anything that is added to enhance the human figure (and satisfy its appetite) after its formative creation. Fortune's gifts are presented as pure ornament, an afterthought inherently secondary to birth and being. Moreover, augmenting this idea of Fortune's ornamental gifts to others in this book is her own embodiment of ornament, wherein her deceitfulness is specifically described in cosmetic terms—as *fuci*: paint, dyes, or rouges—and where her monsterness, *prodigium*, is linguistically aligned to her prodigal, *prodigus*, nature: "Intellego multiformes illius prodigii fucos" [I know well the manifold disguises of that monster (II.pr.1.3)], says Philosophy shortly before she takes on Fortune's voice.

In Boethius's passage above, the seeming echo of Job 1:21 ("Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away") underscores the extent to which clothing acted as a symbolic catch-all for worldly goods and material existence as general concepts in medieval Western culture, as well as the extent to which the binary image of the clothed/naked body had achieved iconic status among early Christian writers as a metaphor for life and death.²⁹ Undoubtedly it

also introduces the suggestion that Fortune's goods are a Job-like testing of human resolve in the face of both material superfluity and dearth, a suggestion that Boethius continues to build on in the *Consolatio* until Fortune's gifts—or rather, the loss of Fortune's gifts—are presented, by the end of the text, as instruments for spiritual and intellectual enlightenment. As I state above, the *Consolatio* is, for all intents and purposes, a book about a man literally stripped of his possessions. Yet Boethius does not approach his fundamental sartorial trope the way some of his predecessors do. He transforms the sartorial swapping of social status between emperor and slave that we see in Lucian into a meditation on enslavement as the metaphorical space of material desires and possession. Likewise, he largely avoids the overt gendering of ornament found in his predecessors—male ornament targeted by the early Stoics and female ornament castigated by the church fathers—in favor of exploring the universal experience of adornment as a phenomenological patterning of enclosure and exposure, acquisition and loss.³⁰

Clothing and ornamentation take a surprising number of forms in the relatively low-impact sartorial imagery of Boethius's text, but most examples work toward an understanding of the shared human experience of garments and all goods. Rather than use clothing terms with specific cultural connotations in the late-antique period, for example, Boethius uses generic versions: his most common word for clothing is *vestis* (garment or dress). Philosophy's much-discussed garment is a *vestis* (I.pr.1.3) rather than a more specific female *stola* or *palla*; likewise the coveted clothing singled out for recrimination in Book II *prosa* 5 is also *vestis* (II.pr.5.17) rather than any number of other terms that could be used: *tunica* or *dalmatica* for under- and overtunics; *pallium*, *lacerna*, *paenula*, or *saegum* for different kinds of cloaks; let alone decorations such as stripes (*clavi*), medallions (*orbiculi*), or squares (*tabulae*) often added to these garments.³¹ Boethius's own attire is referred to as *habitus* (I.pr.4.4), a word whose importance I will discuss at depth below, but which similarly refuses socioeconomic distinction regarding either his formerly lavish garments as *magister officiorum* or his current lowly prison garb. Luxurious clothes are also referred to by generic terms such as *cultus* (IV.m.2.4), and purple robes of emperors are described as generically purple (IV.m.2.2) or Tyrian (II.m.4.1), rather than, for example, as the *paludamentum* actually worn by the emperor. Likewise, ornament is described by its general term—*ornamentum* (II.pr.5.26, 30)—rather than through descriptions of particular ornamental objects. While clearly interested in forms of adornment, that is, Boethius completely avoids describing or even discussing the specific and dramatic Byzantine fashions of the age, through which Roman dress began to take on the patterned designs of the Syrians and the

other exotic fabrics and colors of the East; in fact the Roman *toga*—which, despite Tertullian’s call for a shift to the *pallium*, was still the heart of Roman citizenship, even if only worn mostly for official occasions at this point—is not mentioned once by name in Boethius’s text.³² By repeatedly drawing attention to clothing but not to precise or historicized fashions, Boethius offers a philosophical meditation on the *fact* of clothing (or clothing-as-good) rather than on its cultural values: he analyzes the mundane, almost imperceptible features of *having* (material goods) that are usually forgotten in the face of the sociocultural codes embedded in the wearing of these objects. Focusing not on the luxury element of Fortune’s goods, but on the largely unseen properties of *all* goods, Boethius makes clear that a fundamental element of Fortune’s cycle of give and take—her literal encircling of men, *circumdatum*, with riches—is the effect it has on people: that is, the lingering attachment that humans have to goods once they are gone, and, most importantly, the potential for intervention that this moment of unexpected loss or despoilment presents.

The indirect and implicit manner in which objects promote human attachment has been explored by a number of contemporary theorists. The process of enculturation that Bourdieu has termed the *habitus*, for example, is sustained through the goods of the world by way of the interconnected practices of objectification and embodiment.³³ According to Bourdieu, mental structures are inextricably connected to the objects that shape them and that they shape: “the mental structures which construct the world of objects are constructed in the practice of a world of objects constructed according to the same structures.”³⁴ Just as meaning is objectified in things, so the structure of things, and especially “the seemingly most insignificant details of *dress*, *bearing*, physical and verbal *manners*,” what he earlier calls “[p]ersonal style,” incorporates meaning into bodily memory and practice.³⁵ The unconsciously internalized aspect of this process offers the most instructive glimpse into the subtle workings of human reliance on such goods.³⁶ Like Bourdieu’s *habitus*, Daniel Miller’s discussion of the “humility” of objects, Bill Brown’s concept of the “thingness” of objects, and Grant McCracken’s notions of the “inevitability” of objects all maintain the important Heideggerian realization that a large part of the significance of objects lies in their ability, most of the time, to *not be seen*. As Miller puts it: “The less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behavior, without being open to challenge. They determine what takes place to the extent that we are unconscious of their capacity to do so.”³⁷ In a similar way Grant McCracken discusses the way goods work to concretize culture, persuading

its inhabitants of cultural categories, principles, and ideologies: "When culture appears in objects," he says, "it seeks to make itself appear inevitable, as the only sensible terms in which anyone can constitute their world. Culture uses objects to convince."³⁸

Boethius's careful examination of this systemic yet ephemeral nature of the human reliance on material objects can be seen not only through his depiction of Fortune's control over garments and goods, but also in the unique way that he challenges the materiality of Fortune herself. Despite being the purveyor of all material things and the primary subject of much of the *Consolatio*, and despite arguing her case against the protagonist in her own words (via Philosophy's *prosopopeia*), Fortune, as is well known, is never actually materially present in the text's frame narrative. Although this conspicuous absence has traditionally been read as Boethius's attempt to deny the goddess power and realism, the device achieves other ends as well, bringing attention to the invisibility of Fortune's material mechanisms, which, like her goods themselves, are so inherent, insidious, and intangible that they are barely intelligible. The dramatized present-absence of Fortune's body and goods in Boethius's text thus invokes a structure of practices very like Bourdieu's largely unseen yet ever-present *habitus*, which, like Fortune herself, "makes coherence and necessity out of accident and contingency."³⁹

In fact, Bourdieu's theoretical notion of the *habitus* originated (via Panofsky, and via Aquinas) in a text that Boethius knew intimately and was responsible for transmitting to the medieval West, Aristotle's *Categories*.⁴⁰ This text has been shown to have had a crucial role in marking the emergence of "things" themselves in human consciousness, and Boethius's influential translation of and commentaries upon it not only became standard textbooks in medieval scholastic culture but also sparked the great metaphysical debate about things and their characteristics, the medieval problem of universals.⁴¹ Aristotle discusses the concept of the *habitus* (Gk. *hexis*; which Boethius translates as *de modis habere*) as one of the ten categories of being outlined in his *Categories*.⁴² Boethius's translation relates the state of *habitus* (having, possessing) to conditions or dispositions both qualitative and quantitative, both intellectual and corporeal: *habitus* relates to "having" knowledge and virtue [dicimur enim disciplinam aliquam habere atque virtutem] as well as "having" a physical height of five or six feet [dicitur enim tricubitam magnitudinem habere vel quadricubitum]; it relates to "having" things in a container [Aut tanquam in vase] or "having" possessions such as a house and field [Aut tanquam possessionem, habere enim domum aut agrum dicimur]; and finally, it encompasses "having" things on the body, such as a cloak or tunic [Aut tanquam ea quae circa corpus sunt, ut vestimentum

vel tunicam]. This section of Aristotle's text concludes the *Categories*, and Boethius's translation makes clear the slippery and ubiquitous nature of this "mode" of having and its potential as a theory of human behavior and experience. At a fundamental level, by using the Latin word *habere* (to have, to be, to wear) in addition to Aristotle's own vestimentary examples, Boethius's translation forcefully suggests the extent to which *wearing* is semantically and conceptually inseparable from *being*.

Turning back to his *Consolatio*, we can see the term *habitus* repeatedly used in a way that plays with this same double meaning, so that *habitus* connotes simultaneously the subject's garments and his overall condition of being. We see this duality, for example, early on in Book I when a self-pitying Boethius charges Philosophy with not noticing that his circumstances have drastically changed since she last saw him: "Talis habitus talisque uultus erat, cum te cum naturae secreta rimarer" [Was my condition / state of dress like this, or my countenance, when I studied nature's mysteries with you?].⁴³ The problematized status of Boethius's actual attire in this text is a subject to which I will return, but for now I would like to point out the important way that Boethius's use of *habitus* seems to tie together the main philosophical threads of the text. If *habitus* identifies the protagonist's vestments, it also identifies his disease—both elements, Philosophy makes clear, which stem from Fortune's cycle of having and losing. Thus at the beginning of Book II, before addressing the nature of Fortune, Philosophy tells the protagonist: "Si penitus aegritudinis tuae causas habitumque cognoui, fortunae prioris affectu desiderioque tabescis" [If I understand the causes of your diseased condition, you are suffering from the absence of your former good fortune].⁴⁴ It is, moreover, Philosophy's own *habitus* that is stolen and worn by the warring philosophical sects who tear pieces from her dress.⁴⁵ As these examples show, like Bourdieu's *habitus*, Boethius's use of the term seems to muddy the subject/object divide, asking the protagonist (and reader) to investigate more deeply these boundaries and the apparent truths that they represent. As we will see later, Boethius's interest in the clothing-being juxtaposition that *habitus* signifies—again, like Bourdieu's concept—also obfuscates the binary opposition between determinism and individual autonomy; Boethius's "condition" or *habitus* comes from his own inner longing for material goods (or *fortunae*), but these are goods that, as we learn later in the text, Fortune distributes or rescinds according to a much larger and all-encompassing divine plan. The sartorial question with which this text begins becomes the meeting point between free will and divine predestination at which it ends.

THE THING ABOUT PHILOSOPHY'S GARMENT

Along with the structural programs of the changing wheel and the changing *habitus*, Boethius's text offers another discourse on materiality: a rigorous interrogation of material goods themselves with regard to the dominant material object of the *Consolatio*, Lady Philosophy's garment. In the narrative frame of the *Consolatio*, this tutorial on materiality begins almost immediately with the ambiguous material presence of Philosophy, whose visual appearance in the first book of the text is presented as inextricable from Boethius's own foggy mental state. The protagonist's famous difficulty in trying to identify the physical characteristics of Philosophy—old or young, average height or supernaturally tall—points not only to the divine potential of this figure who defies all definition but also, I would argue, to the inherent changeability of the material register itself. By the end of the *Consolatio* the protagonist's focus on the nature of the material world has been ostensibly supplanted by a focus on his own process of knowledge: "Everything which is known is known not according to its own power," says Philosophy to the protagonist in Book V, "but rather according to capacity of the knower" [*omne enim quod cognoscitur non secundum sui uim sed secundum cognoscendum potius comprehenditur facultatem*].⁴⁶ Early in the text, however, when the protagonist is still burdened by worldly concerns, this lesson is generated through provocative material objects designed to challenge the protagonist's assumptions regarding material goods and regarding his own material circumstances.

Philosophy's garment, which takes up more than half of her opening description, is the earliest and most prominent example:

Uestes erant tenuissimis filis subtili artificio indissolubili materia perfectae, quas, uti post eadem prodente cognoui, suis manibus ipsa texuerat; quarum speciem, ueluti fumosas imagines solet, caligo quaedam neglectae uetustatis obduxerat. Harum in extremo margine Π Graecum, in supremo uero Θ legebatur intextum atque inter utrasque litteras in scalarum modum gradus quidam insigniti uidebantur, quibus ab inferiore ad superius elementum esset ascensus. Eandem tamen uestem uiolentorum quorundam sciderant manus et particulas quas quisque potuit abstulerant.

[Her clothes were made of imperishable material, of the finest thread woven with the most delicate skill. (Later she told me that she had made them with her own hands.) Their color, however, was obscured by a kind of film

as of long neglect, like smoke-grimed masks. On the bottom hem could be read the embroidered Greek letter Pi, and on the top hem the Greek letter Theta. Between the two a ladder of steps rose from the lower to the higher letter. Her dress had been torn by the hands of marauders who had each carried off such pieces as he could get.]⁴⁷

Philosophy's garment demonstrates a fundamental conflict in the representative function of material objects. On the one hand the garment represents indestructible Platonic wisdom, the *pi* and *theta* symbolizing practical and theoretical philosophy (that is, looking into the nature of things and speculating about them, which Boethius also describes in his commentary on Porphyry), and the ladder representing the progression from one to the other, the very journey that will shortly be undertaken by the protagonist Boethius in this text. On the other hand, these Greek symbols of learning have been coated with a dirty film of disdain and neglect; the "imperishable" robe has in fact been violently torn and ravaged.⁴⁸ As scholars have long noted, these secondary details point allegorically to the neglect and abuse of philosophical truth.⁴⁹ Yet, importantly, Boethius's subtle details accomplish this allegory by situating the garment in the world of mundane, material objects with their own history of physical wear and tear. Like Philosophy herself, the garment is both there and not there, both a figure for the protagonist's mental journey and a physical object upon which he gazes and with which he interacts. While the allegorical function of the garment tends to draw more immediate attention, the materiality of the garment, coupled with its situatedness as an object of analysis in the text, tells a striking story. The protagonist, stripped of all his possessions and thrown into an empty cell, suddenly finds this one last material good—the only object actually described on the diegetic level of the storyline, the only object depicted as physically present with him in his cell—at his disposal. In this way Philosophy's garment goes beyond *representing* the path he must take; it *is* the path. As the ultimate object of practical philosophical inquiry, the garment offers the protagonist a crucial final experience of material goods and materiality, an exquisitely desired, invaluable *thing* turned torn and dirty that will help him examine, ponder, and ultimately turn away from goods altogether.

The garment achieves this role primarily through its underacknowledged, more "material" features. Like Bill Brown's exemplary dirty window, which alerts the viewer to the window's heretofore ignored materiality, the dirty film and visible tears on Philosophy's robe change the apparent function of the garment, forcing its viewer to see it anew. For Brown, objects that stop functioning in the way they are intended complicate the process of interpretation;

such an object stops being a mere object within the larger code of objects by which we live our lives and instead becomes a more complex “thing,” a material object that has the potential to illuminate the complicated, often inscrutable problem of matter and materiality in relation to subjectivity. That such *thingness*, moreover, represents a moment of change—in Brown’s words, “when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily”—further resembles the role played by Philosophy’s enigmatic dress and by clothing in general in Boethius’s text.⁵⁰ For it is the moment in which Philosophy literally touches her dress to Boethius’s eyes that brings about the most dramatic and iconic change in the *Consolatio*, one repeated over and over in later medieval texts—that is, the sudden clarity of first recognition:

Sui paulisper oblitus est. Recordabitur facile, si quidem nos ante cognouerit; quod ut possit, paulisper lumina eius mortalium rerum nube caligantia tergamus. Haec dixit oculosque meos fletibus undantes contracta in rugam ueste siccauit.

[“He has forgotten for a while who he is, but he will soon remember once he has recognized me. To make it easier for him I will wipe a little of the blinding cloud of worldly concern from his eyes.” And as she spoke she gathered her dress into a fold and wiped from my eyes the tears that filled them.]⁵¹

The transformation effected by this action propels the *Consolatio* toward its philosophical and narrative purpose: Boethius not only suddenly recognizes Philosophy as his former physician, nurse, and teacher, thus *seeing* things wholly differently; he also is able to *speak* directly for the first time in the text, and thus to engage in the dialogue that makes up the rest—that is, the vast majority—of the *Consolatio*. Importantly then, this garment’s initial role in the protagonist’s road toward enlightenment lies not in its Greek symbols of learning but in its most material and mundane of functions: that of a worn dress that records its own physical corruption, and that of a dry cloth wiping away tears. The material garment—or rather, the materiality of the garment—is literally the spark that enables the intellectual and spiritual journey in the first place.

On a fundamental level, as tropes that attempt to make invisible and abstract concepts visible and concrete through material representation, allegorical figures intrinsically interrogate the fraught relationship between

things and ideas, the material and the immaterial.⁵² A text Boethius likely knew well, Macrobius's *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* [*Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*] epitomizes the key role that sartorial symbolism plays in this process, describing how divinities preferred to be presented physically, complete with "amictus ornatusque varios corpus non habentibus" [various clothes and ornaments, though they had no bodies].⁵³ By nature allegorical figures are always pointing to their own material, corporeal absence, an aspect both heightened and deflected by lavish descriptions of their surface ornament. Joel Fineman discusses this inherent emptiness of allegory in terms of its apparent structural concreteness, arguing that a systemic deferral of meaning and truth exists behind allegory's appearance of stability, and that this "structure of continual yearning" and "insatiable desire" corresponds to the introduction of death into the world (via Adam's Fall).⁵⁴ More recently Daniel Tiffany has approached the subject from another direction, exploring not how allegory enacts materialism, but how material objects can act allegorically, as "automata" that awaken a viewer's curiosity regarding the metaphysical truth behind the surface of the object, yet which—like allegory itself—always ultimately reveal absence rather than answers.⁵⁵ Philosophy's garment does each of these things. On the one hand its long-abandoned Greek symbols of wisdom perform an abstract longing for truth that, as I discuss in more depth below, brings the protagonist's own impending death before him. On the other hand, as a personified figure Philosophy also inherently points to her own material absence and to the emptiness at the heart of the allegorical project, and thus the surface materiality of her dress necessarily takes up the role of the automaton that incites curiosity about more immaterial pursuits.

In stark contrast to its own "everlasting fabric," for example, Philosophy's garment repeatedly calls attention to the protagonist Boethius's looming death—to his own impending material absence. As Henry Chadwick pointed out some time ago, prison clothes during this period were marked with a *theta* for *thanatos* to symbolize the death penalty, and thus there is a good possibility that Boethius himself (author and protagonist) was wearing a *theta* on his garment that is both mirrored by and countered by Philosophy's own.⁵⁶ Moreover, while on the one hand the dark film covering Philosophy's clothing relates conceptually to the dark cloud of worldly concern in Boethius's own eyes, because of which he cannot at first recognize Philosophy or her teachings, it also corresponds to a more culturally laden and materially charged image: that of the soot-covered funeral masks (*fumosas imagines*) to which her clothed figure is explicitly likened in the same opening description. Such masks of deceased male ancestors were the unifying symbol of Roman

funeral rituals, worn by carefully chosen mourners in funeral processions to both celebrate the greatness of the past and to lament the impermanence of the world; after their public use the masks were hung in the atriums of Roman households, where they accumulated soot from the hearth fire until they were needed again.⁵⁷ The implication that Philosophy resembles one of these masks is highly suggestive. For one, it implies that Philosophy's appearance is more than a philosophical primer to cure Boethius of his intellectual illness and to prepare him for his imminent death: it implies that she is part of a larger *spectacle* of that death, there to authorize and instigate a farewell to material existence as well as materialist thinking.⁵⁸ What Boethius sees when he first looks at her is the ghoulish image of his own funeral procession.

If the association of Philosophy's garment with funeral masks or *imagines* asks Boethius to confront his own death, to raise metaphysical questions about the physical world, it also adds to the fetishistic scrutiny of Philosophy's material surface that I discuss above with respect to other details of the garment. As a personification Philosophy already effectively enacts the role of the masked figure: "personification," from the Greek *prosopopeia*, originally referred to the dramatic performances that used masks (Lat. *personae*, Gr. *prosopa*) to stage feelings, an etymology that Boethius not only knew well but discussed at length elsewhere in his writings.⁵⁹ To compare a personification to another mask—or better yet, to suggest that an already personified figure also wears a mask, a mask meant to impersonate a dead (inanimate) person, no less—is to metatextually point to the figure's multiple layers of "thingness": Philosophy becomes all surface, all adornment, a mask behind a mask that wears a type of there-but-not-there clothing over her clothing. This effect is further heightened when Philosophy actualizes the other meaning of *prosopopeia* by taking on—quite suddenly—the voice of Fortune in Book II, thus performing the role of yet another kind of shell object, a mouth-piece or instrument for voicing Fortune's alternate ideology. The *Consolatio's* hypercritical attention to Philosophy's garment and related surface performances draws our attention not just to the question of her materiality and the materiality of her garment, but also to our own assumptions about and interpretations of material goods. For instance, while Philosophy's scrutinized material presence marks her clearly as the foil of the materially absent Fortune, this binary presents an odd reversal of expectations: surely one would expect Fortune, the goddess of material goods, to be fetishized materially, and Philosophy, the embodiment of philosophical knowledge, to transcend material matters.

The dramatic physical presence of Philosophy's garment fades after its initial role as an object of inquiry in Book I, as the protagonist progresses

toward more theoretical questions that originated in large part with the garment itself. Yet while Boethius's use of Philosophy's garment as a figure for the protagonist's own mental journey speaks to the tradition of *integumentum* in personification allegory, it suggestively alters the central trope, ultimately moving the spotlight from the veiled female figure back to the dispossessed protagonist. Understood together, for example, the descriptions of Philosophy's attire that I have addressed here are as much concerned with how the garment itself might be lost—to age, to neglect, to fading memory, to poachers and thieves—as they are with the promise of what lies beneath it (i.e., the philosophical truth unveiled by the hermeneutic process). In this program of material change and loss, Philosophy's garment always points back to the material losses experienced by the protagonist just prior to writing his text. Whereas, for example, Philosophy's garment presents her stoic steadfastness in the face of material neglect and abuse, Boethius complains vociferously about the change in his material circumstances; whereas Philosophy's ornamental Theta represents the heights of metaphysical knowledge, Boethius's own (potential) Theta corresponds to his imprisonment and death penalty; whereas Philosophy seems wrapped in a confounding double veil, the Job-like Boethius has been veritably stripped of all his possessions. By comparison, the only thing we know for certain about Boethius's own attire is that it has *changed*, as he makes clear when he demands of Philosophy whether his *habitus* is the same as when she last saw him (I.pr.4.4). And we know that this change, along with other material changes, creates both the impetus for and the subject of the *Consolatio*. Philosophy's garment thus also suggests that the images of clothing and adornment in this text cannot be separated from the underlying question of what a subject becomes when he is stripped of his objects.

ORNAMENT AND ORDER

The *Consolatio* works toward an answer for the larger question about the stripped subject by examining the function of ornament and material possession in mortal and divine power structures, with particular focus on the notions of freedom and free will. This discussion directly invokes the paradigm of freedom and imprisonment associated with the traditional philosopher's cloak. Like Tertullian's earlier investigation of his own change to wearing the philosopher's *pallium* that I discuss in my introduction, Boethius's investigation of the despoiled subject cannot help but be informed by the asceticism made famous by his self-identified hero in the *Consolatio*, Socrates.

The protagonist's voiced longing for his former clothing—the ornate robes of the *magister officiorum*, we might assume—obviously stands in stark contrast to the simple, single *pallium* that Socrates is repeatedly said to have worn, and that Tertullian subsequently promoted.⁶⁰ The legend of Socrates' *pallium* was used by early philosophers to explore the conceptual link between ornament and human freedom; in defending his sparse sartorial aesthetic in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, for example, Socrates upends conventional thinking about material goods, arguing that the ornaments marking the wealth of the free man in actuality enslave that person to the body's desires.⁶¹ In Plato's *Phaedo*, a text that dramatizes Socrates' final hours and death in the jail at Athens, Socrates uses the metaphor of adornment to discuss the Platonic freeing of the soul from the imprisonment of the body:

That is the reason why a man should be of good cheer about his own soul, if during life he has cast away the pleasures of the body and its ornamentation as of no concern to him and doing him more harm than good, but has seriously concerned himself with the pleasures of learning, and adorned his soul not with alien but with its own ornaments, namely, moderation, righteousness, courage, freedom, and truth, and in that state awaits his journey to the underworld.⁶²

When, facing his own imminent death in jail in Pavia several centuries later, Boethius draws on similar imagery and terminology, tying an underlying trope of adornment to his governing theme of imprisonment, he proposes a deeper exploration of the role ornament plays in freedom. Free beings, Philosophy says at the beginning of Book V, are first and foremost those who have the power to distinguish between what should be desired and what should be avoided (V.pr.2); thus, when subjects find themselves enslaved by their desires, she further explains, they have in fact become captives of their own freedom [*libertate captivae* (V.pr.2.10)].⁶³ The locus of this paradoxical freedom/imprisonment is the bodily ornament waiting to be thrown off or stripped away: the human subject is on the one hand like a tamed Carthaginian lion who will throw off its decorative fetters and revert to its origins with one taste of blood (III.m.2), and on the other, like a tyrant who, when stripped of his purple robes, reveals that he is the “enslaver slaved,” bound by his chains of lust (IV.m.2). This logic of adornment not only records the economy of power in the material world but also on some level produces it, as Philosophy makes very clear when she describes the way humans control one another through their material goods and bodies: “Quo uero quisquam ius aliquod in quempiam nisi in solum corpus et quod infra corpus est—fortu-

nam loquor—possit exserere? Num quicquam libero imperabis animo? Num mentem firma sibi ratione cohaerentem de statu propriae quietis amouebis?” [For how can one man exert power over another except upon his body, or upon his fortune, which is less than his body? Can you impose upon a free mind, or deprive a rationally self-possessed mind of its equanimity?].⁶⁴

As this passage illustrates, the subject stripped of his goods and fortune embodies the important distinction between possession and self-possession: freedom is a mind free from the tyranny of the material body and its ornaments. To ensure that the protagonist and reader fully embrace this point, Boethius must tease open the inextricable connection between subjectivity and possession. Thus, whereas Philosophy’s dress provides the initial opportunity for the protagonist to challenge the often-imperceptible role that material objects play in his self-understanding and to confront his own physical dispossession of them, her next step asks that he begin to conceptually separate himself from those objects. It is no coincidence that adornment provides the guiding metaphor for much of the discussions between Philosophy and Boethius regarding Fortune’s material goods, and that, like Philosophy’s dress, it opens up lingering questions about the role of objects in creating and perpetuating misguided notions of subjectivity. Boethius’s nostalgia for his former ornament, while most profound at the beginning of the *Consolatio*, informs the stripping away of misperception throughout the work. The recurring imagery of despoiled purple robes, for example, must be read with the realization that this color was worn not only by emperors, but also by consuls, magistrates, and other public officials at Boethius’s own (former) rank. The inveterate “tyrant” in purple thus transcends Theodoric to figure and refigure Boethius himself—that is, the Boethian self.

The most extended discussion of the pivotal role that ornament plays in self-knowledge and self-possession occurs in the influential passages of Book II.pr.5–m.5, in which Philosophy examines the objects that people desire and for which they strive. The fact that Philosophy very closely repeats this discussion in Book III.pr.2–m.3, when she describes the false goods often mistaken for true Good, marks both structurally and poetically the importance of this discussion; by reduplicating her discussion of the list of desired objects, for example, Philosophy not only draws extra attention to these items but also rhetorically reinscribes the excess of material goods themselves. In Book II.pr.5, clothing is singled out as part of this list of prize possessions including money, gems, beautiful land, and loyal attendants, and it provides the central image for what Philosophy describes as the troubling human need to constantly adorn oneself with such goods:

Itane autem nullum est proprium uobis atque insitum bonum ut in externis ac sepositis rebus bona uestra quaeratis? Sic rerum uersa condicio est ut diuinum merito rationis animal non aliter sibi splendere nisi inanimatae supellectilis possessione uideatur? Et alia quidem suis contenta sunt, uos autem deo mente consimiles ab rebus infimis excellentis naturae ornamenta captatis nec intellegitis quantam conditori uestro faciatis iniuriam.

[Do you try to satisfy your desires with external goods which are foreign to you because you have no good within you which belongs to you? What an upside-down state of affairs when a man who is divine by his gift of reason thinks his excellence depends on the possession of lifeless bric-a-brac! Other creatures are content with what they have; but you, made in the likeness of God by virtue of your reason, choose ornaments for your excellent nature from base things, without understanding how great an injury you do to your Creator.]⁶⁵

Adornment is such a habitual human practice of possession, Philosophy adds, that in taking pleasure in one's property and landscape an owner effectively imagines that he himself is adorned with fruits and flowers:

An uernis floribus ipse distingueris aut tua in aestiuos fructus intumescit ubertas? Quid inanibus gaudiis raperis, quid externa bona pro tuis amplexaris? Numquam tua faciet esse fortuna quae a te natura rerum fecit aliena.

[Are you yourself adorned by spring flowers? Are you laden with summer fruit? When you act as though such external goods are your own, you are deluded by foolish satisfaction. Fortune can never make things yours which nature has made foreign to you.]⁶⁶

These passages (and those surrounding them) graft the debate about material goods onto the standard Stoic distinction between that which is natural and that which is artificial, alien, external, and supplementary, a paradigm that was appropriated and perpetuated so effectively by the early Patristic fathers that it remained operative throughout medieval discussions of wealth, clothing, artifice, and self-fashioning.⁶⁷ Yet, aside from the fact that Fortune herself is designated as female, Boethius's formulation seems to shy away from the explicit gendering of ornament that Marcia Colish identifies in other Stoic-influenced writing.⁶⁸ Rather than historicizing and feminizing the human impulse to adorn, Boethius's text situates adornment in relation to the philo-

sophical question behind the notion of possession itself—the question of what constitutes “one’s own.”

Philosophy explicitly uses this notion of ownership to thwart the protagonist’s attachment to the material goods she singles out: jewels (their light is the gem’s, not the individual’s), land (nothing of which has to do with its owner), honest attendants (whose honesty can hardly be counted as another’s possession), and finally, fine clothing (which causes admiration for its material or maker, not its wearer): “Iam uero pulchrum uariis fulgere uestibus putas. Quarum si grata intuitu species est, aut materiae naturam aut ingenium mirabor artifices” [Perhaps you think that beauty means being resplendent in clothing of every variety: but if clothing catches my eye, my admiration will be directed at either the quality of the material or the skill of the tailor].⁶⁹ Boethius’s investigation of the boundaries of “one’s own” carries the residual effect of centuries of philosophical and theological inquiry regarding the ethics of ownership and possession—while at one end of the conversation Plato refused any form of ownership to his ideal rulers, at the other end, Augustine struggled to distinguish what he called “human right,” or the right bestowed by emperors, from “divine right.”⁷⁰ By Boethius’s time private property was clearly juxtaposed against the notion of a “natural law” authored and enforced by God. In the words of Justinian,

Sed naturalia quidem iura, quae apud omnes gentes peraeque observantur, divina quadam providentia constituta, semper firma atque immutabilia permanent. Ea vero, quae ipsa sibi quaeque civitas constituit, saepe mutari solent, vel tacito consensus populi, vel alia postea lege lata.

[The laws of nature, observed by all nations, inasmuch as they are the appointment of a divine providence, remain fixed and immutable. But the laws, which every city has enacted for itself, suffer frequent changes, either by tacit consent of the people, or by some subsequent law.]⁷¹

Natural law is unswerving and equal for all; other kinds of law (which Justinian divides into civil and national law) are mutable, contingent, and localized. In the historical discourses around private property, then, we can recognize the foundations of Boethius’s own link between unchanging divine law and Fortune’s law of change. Indeed, the boundaries of private ownership of objects were so variable and elusive to jurists in this period that their explanation, titled “De Rerum Divisione” [Divisions of Things], takes up forty-eight statutes, four times more space than most other subjects, in Justinian’s renowned legal code established a few years after Boethius’s death. Material

objects, and humankind's relationship to them, were under profound cultural scrutiny when Boethius wrote about the fallacy of Fortune's goods and the experience of his own material despoilment.

It was the Church fathers who explicitly connected the fraught ethics of ownership with the morality of ornamentation. For, in appropriating the philosophical and juridical discourse around notions of private property and the idea of a natural law corresponding to divine providence, early Christian writers also augmented their reformulation of Stoic ascetic values.⁷² Viewing private property as opposed to divine law and as the result of changeful, unnatural sin, they linked it with Adam's Fall—and hence, with the crucial shift from Edenic nakedness to postlapsarian clothing. These writers, unlike Boethius, were especially concerned with ornament in relation to Eve and womankind. In his *De Cultu Feminarum* [On the Apparel of Women], for example, Tertullian recasts the standard Stoic statement of antimaterialism, upon which Boethius's text is also based—"Projiciamus ornamenta terrena, si coelestia optamus" [Let us cast away earthly ornaments if we desire heavenly]—in relation to female fashions and cosmetics.⁷³ Yet at the heart of these discourses lie the same questions about the inherent problem of private ownership of things; when condemning the use of colored garments, for example, Tertullian states:

Non placet Deo, quod non ipse produxit, nisi si non potuit purpureas et aerinas oves nasci jubere. Si potuit, ergo jam noluit; quod Deus noluit, utique non licet fingi. Non ergo natura optima sunt ista, quae a Deo non sunt, auctore naturae; sic diabolo esse intelliguntur, ab interpolatore naturae. Alterius enim esse non possunt, si Dei non sunt: quia aemuli sint necesse est, quae Dei non sunt; alius autem, praeter diabolum et angelos ejus, aemulus Dei non est.

[That which He Himself has not produced is not pleasing to God, unless He was *unable* to order sheep to be born with purple and sky-blue fleeces! If He was *able*, then plainly He was *unwilling*: what God willed not, of course, ought not to be fashioned. Those things, then, are not the best by *nature* which are not from God, the *Author* of nature. Thus they are understood to be from *the devil*, from *the corrupter* of nature: for there is no other whose they *can* be, if they are not God's; because what are not God's must necessarily be His rival's.]⁷⁴

As this passage reveals, Tertullian inherently associated the fraught question of ownership of material goods with the equally troubled notion of mortal

artifice. To dye garments—one example among the many vices of clothing and ornament he addresses in this text—is not only to claim them as one’s own but to alter them from their natural, divine state, thus refashioning God’s creation. Likewise, to fashion the self with such clothing and ornament, according to Tertullian, is inherently to challenge, through cosmetic change, the unchanging divine law of the divine artificer.⁷⁵

Boethius is more subtle than Tertullian when he investigates the relationship between material possession, self-fashioning, and divine law, yet his choice to make bodily adornment a central conceit of Fortune’s unnatural and excessive material gifts was clearly informed by a similar association. In the *Consolatio*, as I have discussed, Boethius explicitly links the protagonist’s initial state of alteration to his possession and loss of Fortune’s vestimentary goods; likewise, he situates Fortune’s law of material mutability squarely in comparison to the divine law of immaterial stasis.⁷⁶ In helping to actualize the individual’s experience of the changeable material world on the one hand and to map out the larger structure of the path to material transcendence on the other, Boethius’s vestimentary symbolism implicitly draws a link between individual ornamentation and divine design. Angus Fletcher has discussed this kind of conceptual link as the allegorical function of all ornament (he uses the Greek term *kosmos*) to reflect the positional relationship between the individual object (microcosmos) and the universe within which it exists (macrocosmos).⁷⁷ Ornament, or *kosmos*, he argues, draws attention not just to the hierarchical status of the object and its wearer within various spheres of order—societal, rhetorical, cosmic—but also to the tensions within and formations of those relationships.⁷⁸ In this context the *habitus* stripped off the protagonist’s back in Boethius’s text always already speaks to his place in and relationship to divine order—that is, to the topic of free will.

It follows, then, that only one kind of possession is natural and unchanging in Boethius’s text, and that is the natural law of self-possession: “Igitur si tui compos fueris, possidebis quod nec tu amittere umquam uelis nec fortuna possit auferre” [Then if you possess yourself, you have something you will never want to give up and something which Fortune cannot take from you].⁷⁹ It is of course *misfortune*—presented in Boethius’s text, as in the morality play with which I opened this chapter, as a twofold stripping, since when she strips her subjects of their goods Boethius’s Fortune also “unmasks” herself (II.pr.8.1)—that offers the freedom of self-possession. As Philosophy says:

Illa fallit, haec instruit; illa mendacium specie bonorum mentes fruentium
ligat, haec cognitione fragilis, felicitates absoluit; itaque illam uideas uen-

tosam fluentem suique semper ignaram, hanc sobriam succinctamque et ipsius aduersitatis exercitatione prudentem.

[Good fortune deceives, adverse fortune teaches. Good fortune enslaves the minds of good men with the beauty of the specious goods which they enjoy; but bad fortune frees them by making them see the fragile nature of happiness. You will notice that good fortune is proud, insecure, ignorant of her true nature; but bad fortune is sober, self-possessed, and prudent through the experience of adversity.]⁸⁰

As the final image of this passage suggests, possession of all kinds, whether of material objects or of self, constitutes a vestimentary order of existence: literally, the so-called good Fortune created by material prosperity is described as *fluentem*, loose and ungirdled, while the so-called bad Fortune constituted by loss is *succinctam*, belted.⁸¹ In both cases, Fortune—both the goddess and the material goods that she personifies—is the adornment that mediates the subject's experience and interaction with the world. Understanding Fortune's habits reveals the underlying tension behind the notion of *bonum* itself: the inextricable connection between the necessity of *having* goods (Boethius's subject at the beginning of the text) and the necessity of *being* good (his subject at the text's end).

CONCLUSION

Throughout the *Consolatio*, Boethius's examination of Fortune's changeable material goods is underscored by the text's own overtly variable form, the alternation between meter and prose that structures each book. The text's prosimetric structure ensures that stylistic changeability is ever present in the reader's mind, forcing the reader to experience and to navigate changeable poetic form at the same time that he or she reads about Fortune's changeable goods. In a general sense, the *Consolatio*'s poetic aesthetics speaks in different ways to each of the four main discourses of material change I have explored in the sections of this chapter. On the one hand the altered state of the protagonist's poetry—presented most dramatically by the despairing first meter of Book I—corresponds to the altered sartorial states of both the protagonist and Philosophy at the beginning of the text, both of whom, as I discuss above, teach about the fallacy of Fortune's goods through their own material despoilment. On the other hand, while the larger vacillating structure of the text most immediately echoes the changeable nature of Fortune's ever-

turning wheel, it also eventually speaks to the related question of mortal versus divine order. For example, when the text progresses beyond the poetry-laden first book, which begins and ends in meter, the aesthetic vacillations of the form become more regularized, with each section of each subsequent book beginning in prose and ending in meter. As the reader adapts to the regularity of these alternations, the unsettled nature of the fragmented form slowly translates into a seemingly ordered, recognizable design, a process that effectively materializes the opaque relationship between mortal, material chaos and divine providence that Philosophy describes in her conversations with the protagonist.

The end of the *Consolatio* concludes this aesthetic progression by offering a fleeting moment of stasis in the otherwise vacillating aesthetic structure. By refusing to reshape itself into meter, the final prose section of Book V (V.pr.6) cuts short the structural regularity of the previous three books. The ‘missing’ meter at the end of the *Consolatio* has been explained convincingly by Seth Lerer’s suggestion that it marks the text’s shift into silent prayer.⁸² From the perspective of the text’s aesthetic rhythm, this final silence might also be understood as a cessation of the inherent mutability of form, a cessation that mimics the divine stasis that Philosophy describes in this section.⁸³ Structurally, the missing poem, which would ostensibly deal with the characteristics of divine substance, the subject of V.pr.6, corresponds to the ‘extra’ poem at the end of Book I (I.m.7), which portrays the “dark clouds” [Nubibus atris (I.m.7.1)] of worldly concern that blind and chain the protagonist. As I discuss in depth above, this dark matter of worldliness is one of the *Consolatio*’s dominant metaphors for Fortune’s material goods and the havoc they wreak, and as such it is explicitly connected with both the protagonist’s stripped garment and the dark film covering Philosophy’s garment. It would make structural sense that the extra poem at the end of Book I, on the obscurations effected by worldly goods, would be mirrored by a missing poem at the end of Book V on the true nature of divine substance. In effect, the poem lost shortly after the *Consolatio* ends is a silent conclusion to the garment and other goods lost shortly before it began.

The instance of literary stasis offered by V.pr.6 is not unprecedented in Boethius’s text. It invokes a similar moment earlier in the *Consolatio*, in which a single poet holds the power to stop, if momentarily, the never-ending cycle of material possession and loss embodied by Fortune. In Book III, Boethius’s Orpheus, with his sublime singing, causes the perpetual longing and futile consuming of the underworld to momentarily cease. When Orpheus sings, says Philosophy:

non Ixionium caput
 uelox praecipitat rota
 et longa site perditus
 spernit flumina Tantalus;
 uultur dum satur est modis
 non traxit Tityi iecur.

[Ixion's head is not tormented by the swift wheel, and Tantalus, long maddened by his thirst, ignores the waters he might now drink. The vulture is filled by the melody and ignores the liver of Tityus.]⁸⁴

Music, according to Boethius's *De Institutione Musica*, is an aesthetic order that makes manifest the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm; the *musica humana*, or the harmony of the human body and soul, corresponds to the *musica mundana*, the harmony of the spheres.⁸⁵ This highpoint in Orpheus's narrative would thus seem to suggest that the figure of the musician-poet has been given all the tools necessary to mimic the ordered harmony of divine design and thus to stop the ever-changing wheel of Fortune. Yet, as Boethius's poem further narrates, when it comes to his own overwhelming desire to see his wife, Orpheus famously succumbs to the cycle of possession and loss:

Heu, noctis prope terminos
 Orpheus Eurydicen suam
 uidit, perdidit, occidit.
 Uos haec fabula respicit
 quicumque in superum diem
 mentem ducere quaeritis;
 nam qui Tartareum in specus
 uictus lumina flexerit,
 quicquid praecipuum trahit
 perdit dum uidet inferos.

[Alas, close to the bounds of night / Orpheus backwards turned his sight / And, looking, lost and killed her there. / For you I sing the sad affair, / Whoever seek the upward way / To lift your mind into the day; / For who gives in and turns his eye / Back to the darkness from the sky, / Loses while he looks below / All that up with him may go.]⁸⁶

Boethius clearly situates Orpheus's ultimate and archetypal loss of Eurydice

within the greater theme of having and losing in this text; the infernal depths described by the poem correspond to those same dark and worldly attachments that are described elsewhere as causing the protagonist Boethius's deteriorated state and bowed head.⁸⁷ Orpheus epitomizes the never-ending wheel of desiring, having, and losing; his repeated *misfortune* reminds the reader of the inherent impermanence and conditionality of all of Fortune's goods. Yet as Boethius presents it, though unfulfilled, Orpheus's attempt to repossess his object of desire does offer the potential of enlightenment: a glimpse upward toward daylight from the cavernous recesses of hell.

Boethius's use of Orpheus helps to conclude my discussion of vestimentary change in the *Consolatio* not only because it nicely highlights the potential of literary aesthetics to reveal and scrutinize material attachment and other practices of material culture, a theme that will recur in my following chapters as well, but also because it plays out in a most direct manner the process of material scrutiny that I have been examining in this text. Like Orpheus, Boethius's protagonist is required to observe and contemplate the objects of the world, including his own poetic composition, as they change and pass away. These worldly objects are not abundant in the *Consolatio*, but the experience of their loss encompasses the preliminary action of the text, initiates its philosophical and literary projects, and provides its larger structure and some of its central organizing images. As I have tried to capture in this chapter, Boethius's use of the garment as a unifying symbol for all worldly goods explores the conceptual terrain of material objects on several levels, speaking, for example, to late antique material culture, to Neoplatonic metaphysics, to intertwined pagan and Christian Stoic ideals, and to the hermeneutic practices of the poet-philosopher who must transcend material concerns to seek immaterial truth. While scholars disagree about whether Boethius's protagonist ever in fact reaches the material transcendence he seeks by the end of the *Consolatio*, the beginning of the text offers an indisputably simple path for readers to follow: when experiencing the downfall of Fortune's wheel—that is, the change in one's material circumstances that will inevitably occur—examine very closely one's attachment to the material objects that facilitate that change and to the self-perpetuating habits of practice that they generate.⁸⁸ This lesson begins with a reexamination of the garment that each person wears on his or her body each day.

The practical simplicity of this message becomes very important to later writers. In the next chapter I will trace the development of Boethius's vestimentary discourses through the clothed figure of Fortune in select high- and late-medieval texts, exploring the ways that later writers took up and reworked the trope of changing clothing in the context of their own cultures.

The pervasiveness of Boethius's text, images, and ideas in the high and late Middle Ages meant that the *Consolatio* had a profound influence not only on the cultural understanding of material change and changeability but also on the notion of clothing as a symbol of change. As I will discuss, in the same way that Boethius transformed the classical image of the goddess Fortune as pageant master and clothier into a meditation on the habitual cycles of material possession and loss, so several later writers transformed the Boethian Fortune into a figure for the habitual cycles of consumer behavior that they in turn witnessed in their own lives. In this later tradition Boethius is repositioned as an expert on the care of the self, his dialectic of free will and divine design are made to underlie the emerging discourses of self-fashioning, and his notion of Fortune's ever-changing garments becomes merged with a relative newcomer in the conceptual world of vacillating goods, the notion of "fashion."

TWO

Fashioning Change

WEARING FORTUNE'S GARMENTS IN
HIGH- AND LATE-MEDIEVAL ENGLAND



Was thanne myn habit swiche as it is now?

—Chaucer, *Boece*¹

The vestimentary habits of thought and practice outlined in Boethius's *Consolatio* provided writers throughout medieval Europe with a theoretical structure through which to explore the pleasures and dangers of materialism. As I discussed in chapter 1, while Boethius was interested in examining the allure of material objects in general and clothing in particular, he stayed away from describing the details of contemporary garments in his culture, preferring instead to use clothing as a unifying trope for the universal human experience of Fortune's changeable material goods. I will explore in this chapter the ways that later medieval writers followed Boethius's focus on clothing as Fortune's particular object of influence, and also how they shifted the emphasis of the discussion to precisely the terms that Boethius seems to have avoided: contemporary fashions. As I will demonstrate, clothing and ornament became the primary medium of change for the dominant cultural agent of change—Fortune—at precisely the moment when, clothing historians have recently argued, the phenomenon called “fashion,” devoted explicitly to the notion of restless change, began to materialize as a cultural system.

My analysis will primarily concentrate on the development of Fortune's own changeable ornament—the clothing that adorns her body, rather than the subjects on her wheel—as an emerging trope in vernacular poetry written in high-medieval France and late-medieval England. To give a larger con-

text for this development, however, I will first speak to an important trend in the popular reception of Boethius's text during this period. As scholars have pointed out, high- and late-medieval writers commonly emphasized and augmented the *Consolatio's* practical potential; the themes and tropes from the first two books of the *Consolatio* so dominated its popular reception, for example, that vernacular translations and adaptations of the text often left off the later books partially or altogether, concentrating only on the effective methods of understanding and rejecting the allure of material goods.² Both Jean de Meun and Chaucer, who translated the *Consolatio* in its entirety and clearly knew the work intimately, also draw largely from Boethius's first two books when they allude to Fortune in their work.³ Fourteenth-century England in particular saw an increased interest overall in the secular accessibility of Boethius's text through the commentaries of what Beryl Smalley termed the "classicising" friars, who augmented Boethius's ideas to include more literal, historical, and universal knowledge.⁴ Within this context, while Fortune's ultimate Boethian identity as an intermediary of divine will and order certainly endured in this period, it was outperformed by her popularity as a conceit for the human experience of material prosperity, mutability, and disorder.⁵

One of the most widespread examples of this shift in perception can be found in medieval illuminators' and artists' explorations of the 'stripped men grasping Fortune's wheel' motif that saturated high- and late-medieval European culture. Like the dramatic performance of this trope in the morality play *Bien Advisé et Mal Advisé* that I discuss in my previous chapter, the corresponding visual iconography relied on Boethius's interrelated cycles of having-and-losing and dressing-and-stripping to depict the phenomenology of material change and changeability. While the symbolic meaning of these images inevitably varied according to context—the figures on Fortune's wheel portray a variety of specifics regarding sociopolitical status, material and economic circumstance, and physical degeneration or mutation—the vestimentary scheme is almost always present, and sometimes in extreme forms (see figures 2.1 and 2.2 and plate 1).⁶

In a way that complements the literary examples that I will explore in this chapter, these iconic images of men in states of sartorial transformation demonstrate the paradoxical potential of material objects outlined by Boethius's *Consolatio*. Like the material goods discussed in that text, the objects that encode social and economic capital are revealed in images of Fortune's revolving wheel to be simultaneous purveyors of inevitable misfortune and of the revelation that such misfortune brings: in their ability to represent both the lived experience of immediate material change (literal acquisition and loss)



Figure 2.1 Changing states of dress take prominence in Fortune's iconography, as can be seen in this illumination from the *Bible Moralisée* dated to the first half of the thirteenth century. © BnF, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Latin 11560, fol. 129v.



Figure 2.2 Fourteenth-century artists continued to depict Fortune's victims in changing states of dress, as seen in this manuscript of the *Roman de la Rose* (c. 1350). © BnF. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Fr. 1567, fol. 135v.

and the larger systemic structure of that change (the cycles of acquisition and loss repeated throughout personal and human history), the pictorial representations of Fortune's wheel express both the destructive cycles of material possession and the knowledge derived by examining those cycles. To push this analysis a little further, one could say that in its focus on circular movement and symbolic material objects, this iconography actualizes the trope of Fortune's turning wheel as an exploration of *troping* itself—as a turning (Gk. *trópos*, turn), of one thing into another.

Scholars have studied the growing pervasiveness of Fortune's iconography in high- and late-medieval culture without addressing a parallel development in the aesthetic logic of fashionable clothing in material culture.⁷ With its sartorial representation of systemic capriciousness, mutability of form, and social mobility, Fortune's wheel is the quintessential symbol for the mechanism of medieval fashion. This association manifests broadly in the way complaints about new fashions exemplified the same general characteristics as Fortune: that of erratic, status-oriented changeability depicted by diverse and fluctuating shapes, colors, and styles. In more specific terms, the dialectics of late-medieval fashion itself, entrenched in a discourse about vacillations between old and new shapes, long and short garments, and excessive ornamentation or scantiness, seem inherently keyed to Fortune's paradigm of excess and dearth. The suggestion is made more explicit when the figures on Fortune's wheel appear to play out the cycle of fashion as well as the cycle of Fortune's favors, as in one illumination in an early-fifteenth-century French translation of *Consolatio* (see plate 1).

The image in plate 1 portrays a version of the standard iconography of Fortune's wheel: the king at the top (*Regno*) wears a crown and holds a scepter, the destitute man at the bottom (*Sum sine regno*) has been stripped of all goods, and the two men in between (*Regnabo* and *Regnavi*) either rise toward or fall away from those opposed positions of power, rank, and prosperity. Yet in using standards of vestimentary style to depict Fortune's victims, this illuminator also constructs a story about the phenomenon of fashion. When at the top of the wheel, the man is clearly inscribed as a fashionable "galaunt," a late-medieval social type I will discuss in depth in chapter 5. He wears the stereotypical garments of the fourteenth-century fashion revolution: a tight, short jacket with multicolored patterns on the fabric and wide, pointed pendant sleeves, a low hip belt, tight parti-colored red and green hose on his legs, and extremely long straight pikes (pointed shoes). His garments are considerably more extreme in shape, style, and material than those of the man climbing the wheel on the right (*Regnabo*), who, despite parti-colored hose and an ornamental dagger on his belt that matches the point of his

pikes, wears a jacket with more reserved fabrics and decorative accents. On the opposite side, the man (*Regnavi*) wears even fewer fashionable items: his moderately stylish hat with an upturned brim and pleated—though simple and not dyed—shirt suggest that he is not a peasant but a courtier who has been recently stripped of his outer garment. The varying hairstyles of these men also appear to correspond according to the nuances of fashion: while the naked man at the bottom of the wheel has a cropped or bald head, the man falling has slightly longer hair under his cap, the man rising appears to have even longer curled hair under a green ornamental fillet, and the king has coiffed hair under his crown and a double-pointed beard.

These elements not only use as their main currency the experience of changeable fashions, they also create an implicit comparison between the mannered style of the men on the wheel and that of the fifteenth-century readers who would have examined this illumination as they read this copy of Boethius's text. Importantly, the fashions caricatured here are a bit old fashioned themselves, in that they correspond more clearly to the styles of the late fourteenth century than to those of the early-fifteenth-century culture to which the manuscript belongs, and in this context the readers of the manuscript would have further reason to contemplate the phenomenon of changing fashions: their own understanding of fashionable attire had already displaced much of what they saw represented on the page. Illuminations such as this one remind us of the material hermeneutic that Boethius's text offered late-medieval readers: an opportunity to think about worldly changeability in relation to their own specific use of material goods, to their own changing aesthetics, and to the corresponding changes they witnessed around themselves.

Another significant demonstration of Boethius's influence on high- and late-medieval ideas about material culture in general and clothing culture in particular can be found in a text that was wrongly ascribed to him at the time, *De disciplina scholarium* [*On the Training of Scholars*].⁸ An introduction to the conditions, the discipline, and the coursework required for successful study by scholars from age seven to teachers holding a university degree, this Latin pedagogical text also offers an often-humorous vision of the scholar's struggle to maintain constancy in a world full of material distractions, a list that includes self-ornamentation along with hot weather, excessive food and drink, marriage, the mercantile profession, and the poverty of the adult master besieged by creditors. Written in the first part of the thirteenth century (c. 1230–40), *De disciplina* was an extremely popular text during the high- and late-medieval periods, existing in over 130 manuscripts and over thirty commentaries, paired in manuscripts with the incomparably ubiquitous *Conso-*

latio, and ranked in importance with work by saints Jerome, Augustine, and Bernard.⁹ It enjoyed special relevance in England, where the Dominican friar Nicholas Trevet cited it in his widely circulated commentary on the *Consolatio* (c. 1300), where the Oxford grammarian William Wheatley (who also wrote a commentary on the *Consolatio*) wrote a commentary on it (c. 1309), and where the true author of the text might have lived.¹⁰ Part of the attraction of this text was undoubtedly its role as a kind of companion to the *Consolatio*: whereas the *Consolatio* deals with the last years of Boethius's life, *De disciplina* creates a fiction about Boethius's early years as a student in Athens. Likewise, whereas the *Consolatio* instructs the philosopher to abandon material goods in a general sense, *De disciplina* provides myriad details and anecdotes about the mundane material problems that plague the scholar and teacher who might attempt to do just that.

De disciplina provides a fascinating, largely untapped portrayal of the way that themes from the *Consolatio* were perceived, misperceived, and reworked by writers in high- and late-medieval culture, and especially the manner in which Boethius's name became tied to contemporary ideas about the care of the self. To name a prime example, Trevet's use of the text in his widespread commentary on the *Consolatio* suggests the extent to which *De disciplina* influenced contemporary perceptions about one of the most influential of all of Boethius's poems in the high- and late-medieval period, II.m.5 on the blissful "former age." The first three lines of Boethius's original meter target the vice of *luxuria*—literally, "extravagance" or "excess"—as the sole destroyer of that first age: "Felix nimium prior aetas / contenta fidelibus aruis / nec inerti perdita luxu" [O happy was that long lost age / Content with nature's faithful fruits / And not ruined by slothful luxury].¹¹ When discussing line 3 in his commentary, Trevet cites *De disciplina* by name in order to elaborate on the key term *luxuria*, pointing readers to that text's threefold definition of the concept:

NEC PERDITA LUXU INERTI id est non erat dedita luxurie et bene dicit LUXU INERTI quia inercia et ocium ut multum sunt causa luxurie! . . . Est autem luxus triplex ut docet Boecius de disciplina scolarium: quedam in coitu; quedam in cibo et potu; quedam in uestitu. Quomodo autem quolibet istorum homo ad perdicionem inducitur satis docet ibidem.

[AND WAS NOT RUINED BY SLOTHFUL LUXURY (3), that is, was not a slave to luxury, and he aptly calls LUXURY SLOTHFUL, for how much are idleness and slothfulness the causes of luxury! . . . There are three sorts of luxury, as Boethius teaches in his work *On the Training of Scholars*: luxury in sexual

matters, luxury in matters of food and drink, luxury in the choice of clothing. He clearly shows us in the same work how a man is led to ruin by any one of these forms of luxury.]¹²

With respect to its role as one of the seven deadly sins, the term *luxuria* had come by the fourteenth century to mean almost exclusively the first vice listed: sexual indulgence or “lechery.”¹³ Yet this passage insists on the word’s broader meaning: *luxuria* as the antithesis of frugality as well as chastity, a form of extravagance that inherently connects lechery and gluttony to luxury goods.¹⁴ Contemporary poets demonstrate a similar impulse: in their reworkings of II.m.5, both Jean de Meun in the thirteenth century and Chaucer in the fourteenth century emphasize the literal sense of Boethius’s wording, using the cultural keyword “outrage,” or excess, to translate *luxuria* in both French and Middle English, and thereby keeping the focus on the excessive use of material goods that Boethius singles out in his original text.¹⁵

The passages in question from *De disciplina* offer numerous specific examples of the threefold extravagance explicated by the Pseudo-Boethius author. In discussing the vice of excessive clothing, the author includes a long list of debasing habits of personal adornment that starts with variety of clothing and then indulges in many other titillating details of cosmetic self-maintenance. The personification of ornament in this passage strikes a moralizing posture closer to Prudentius’s *Psychomachia* than to Boethius’s restrained *Consolatio*:

Haec autem vestium gaudet varietate frequentiae, earumque in sigillatione membratim, pectinis beneficio caesariem polire, et calamistri tortuositate, florumque diversitate seriatim lascivere [*sic*], gulamque suam fuco perfundere, novaculaeque frequenti castigationi inhiare, sinum aromatibus adimplere, gemmatis colla monilibus, Parthorumque cingulis ventrem castigatum plebi ostendere, rostratis tabulatisque calceis ut regina incedere, colloque elato, gutture inflato, supercilio mutilato, oculo impudico, fastuosoque incesso semicirculariter incedere gaudet.

[Furthermore [the vice of ornament] rejoices in the variety of a large supply of clothes, and in the little figures which adorn these clothes on every limb, and in making the hair shiny with the help of a comb, in taking unseemly delight in tight curling irons and a display of various flowers, in forcing fancy foods down the throat, admiring frequent smoothings of the skin with a razor, filling the bosom with perfumes and the neck with bejewelled necklaces, revealing to the common people a stomach held flat by Parthian girdles, and rejoicing in walking about like a queen with pointed and high-

soled shoes, with neck held aloft, throat puffed up, eyebrows plucked, with a shameless eye and a haughty extravagant (or semi-circular) gait.]¹⁶

This text locates its aesthetic more overtly in late-antique, rather than high-medieval, practices of adornment, offering details about shaved skin and “Parthian” girdles to help perpetrate the illusion of Boethius’s authorship. The focus remains, however, on the culture of transformative excess provided by ornament: with each additional turn of a phrase, yet another layer is added in the process of fashioning the self. In one particularly evocative moment, self-shaping evolves into a mesmerizing rhythm of shape-shifting: “colloque elato, gutture inflato, supercilio mutilato.” Later in the passage the figure undergoes a Boethian change of fortune, tumbling from the heights of excess and haughtiness to the depths of poverty and dearth: “Quid plura dicam, ad tantam licet invitus devenit inopiam, quod ea quae prius fastidiendo contempsit, mendicans corrogando composuerit, fortunae meatu permutato” [To cut a long story short, this vice falls victim to such great poverty, however reluctant it may be, that it becomes satisfied with begging for what it previously arrogantly despised, once the path of fortune has changed].¹⁷ I discussed in the previous chapter the ways in which Boethius’s *Consolatio* touches upon the notion of self-fashioning in its scrutiny of the role that dress and ornament play in cultural use and habits of material possession; here, Boethius is made into an irrefutable authority on the subject.

Finally, in its emphasis on the notion of *varietas vestium*, variety of clothes, this passage from *De disciplina* would have particularly resonated with late-medieval English readers and writers, since, as I discussed in my introduction, the concept had become by the fourteenth century a recognizable feature of nationalistic self-description among English writers. In fact Boethius specifically mentions variety in clothes in II.pr.5 of the *Consolatio* (the prose section that anticipates the more famous poem II.m.5) when he describes clothing as one of the false goods of Fortune: “Iam uero pulchrum uariis fulgere uestibus putas” [Perhaps you think that beauty means being resplendent in clothing of every variety.]¹⁸ It is quite possible that this passage inspired the corresponding passage about *varietas vestium* in *De disciplina*; it would doubtless have been part of Trevelyan’s understanding as he connected the passage with II.m.5 in his commentary on the *Consolatio*. Considering the pervasiveness among English scholastic circles of both the *Consolatio* and *De disciplina*, often in the same manuscript, and the possibility that *De disciplina* was written by an English author, it is conceivable that either or both of these textual references influenced the later perception of English *varietas vestium* by Ranulph Higden that is discussed by Andrew Galloway. This would place

Boethius at the center of medieval English clerical discourses about dress and changeability, a discourse, as Galloway makes clear, that had a great influence on secular as well as learned discussions about the fashioning and self-fashioning of a national English aesthetic.¹⁹ Regardless of whether Boethian texts were a literary source for discussions of *varietas vestium*, however, it is clear that during the high- and late-medieval period when the Boethian authorship of *De disciplina* was accepted as authentic, Boethius was understood to have a profound influence on material matters, not only because of his philosophical work on transcending material goods in the *Consolatio*, but also because of his attributed work in *De disciplina* on the kinds of practical “discipline” needed to avoid specific luxury goods and the vices of excess, variety, and changeability that they were thought to engender.

FORTUNE’S FRENCH *MODE*: SELF-FASHIONING IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The high- and late-medieval inclination to connect Boethian literary tropes to cultural practices involving luxury goods can be seen in the historical development of Fortune herself as a figure of and for fashion in this period, a tropological evolution that will be my primary focus for the remainder of this chapter. As I discussed in the previous chapter, in his *Consolatio* Boethius explicitly presents Fortune’s powers in vestimentary terms, but, in contrast to his elaborate description of her foil Philosophy, he refuses to describe Fortune’s personified figure in such material terms. By comparison, later writers typically accentuate the corporeal figuration of Fortune’s transitory ways, often using as her primary characteristic the changeable attire she wears on her body. To follow the development of this imagery is to chart the trajectory of medieval ideas about clothing and ornament as mediators of and figures for cultural change; inversely, it is also to chart the process by which the goddess of worldly changeability becomes a conceit for the emerging related phenomena of fashion, conspicuous consumption, and self-fashioning. As I will illustrate, the more *stylistic* change begins to stand in for changes in circumstance within Fortune’s iconography—for example, as the symbolic clout of Fortune’s ever-changing fashions begins to challenge and even surpass that of her spinning wheel in literary representations—the more attainable Fortune’s favors seem to become as forms of symbolic capital that can be purchased, imitated, and appropriated. Ironically, through its growing association with contemporary material practices involving novel fashions, a trope that begins as a symbol of the *lack* of control mortals have over their own material

circumstances becomes by the end of the medieval period a potential symbol for the power wielded by the self-fashioning subject.²⁰

One of the few critical attempts to historicize medieval Fortune's changing iconography underscores the importance of the twelfth century's commercial and economic changes to her development. Alexander Murray posits that the emergence of the wheel in twelfth-century visual representations of the goddess may reflect the explosive new money-based economy of this period as well as the social instability that came with it: "the growing prevalence and vigour, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, of up-and-down social movement."²¹ Equally, and in many respects more profoundly influenced by that period's increased focus on money, commerce, and social mobility, however, is Fortune's sartorial representation. Sarah-Grace Heller has delineated the fundamental criteria that helped a nascent fashion system emerge alongside the commercial developments of twelfth- and thirteenth-century France, revealing how individual elements such as discourses of spending and shopping, unique sewing and styles, and an escalating fashion lexicon worked together to help sustain an emerging ideology dependent on "the desire for distinction, uniqueness and admiration."²² A glance at Heller's list of criteria makes evident why Fortune was such an important figure for writers exploring the emerging ideology of fashion, as the principle of change and/or changeability dominates the list, from criterion number one, fashion's "disqualification of the past"; to criterion number two, "society-wide desire for constant, systematic change"; to criterion five, "change occurs in superficial forms rather than in major ones"; to criterion eight, criticism about criteria numbers one and two.²³ According to Heller, and previously according to Gilles Lipovetsky, although he situates his discussion later in the medieval period, a crucial aspect of the changes that make up the fashion system is their convergence in "an esthetic cult of the self": a growing interest and investment in distinctive consumer practices and unique individual sartorial choices.²⁴ Fortune's literary iconography in this period seems to reflect these cultural changes in a specific way, which is to present Fortune as enacting upon her *own* body the type of spectacular sartorial oscillation that she so famously unleashes on her victims.

Alain de Lille offers a brief but prototypical example of this reconceptualization of Fortune as a figure of self-fashioning. Within his longer description of Fortune's personified appearance in his *Anticlaudianus* (c. 1170), Alain describes her as a Boethian figure in a Roman toga, lamenting her change of circumstances: "Nunc meliore toga splendet, nunc paupere cultu [p]lebescens Fortuna jacet, nunc orphana veste [p]rostat, et antiquos lugere videtur honores" [Now she shines forth in finer toga, now slumming, she wallows in the

clothes of the poor; now left without a dress to her name, she offers herself to the public and is seen bemoaning her honours of old]. This epigrammatic description of Fortune's dress stages several important elements of Fortune's material changeability: the speed of her alterations underscored by the temporal dislocation of the "nunc . . . nunc" phrasing; her mutability presented as a dialectic between ornament and nakedness; and her performance of spectacle as an object of the public gaze. Fortune's sartorial descent is imagined not only in terms of prostitution, a familiar overtone for personified figures that we have seen used by Macrobius, but also, and more uniquely, as a type of "orphaned" existence of deprivation and abandonment. In the narrative of the *Anticlaudianus* Fortune is the last personification to give gifts to the New Man, her gifts being the finishing touches above and beyond the foundational gifts of the virtues and seven liberal arts, and when she astonishes the court of Nature by arriving to bestow this final contribution, her changeable sartorial aesthetic seems to have developed more properly into a style rather than an idiosyncrasy: for the first time, her "habitus mutatio" [change of dress] and "vultus [d]egener" [déclassé look] *aestheticize* change rather than enacting it.²⁵

This impulse is taken up later by Jean de Meun, who greatly expands Alain's image of Fortune's stylized sartorial bipolarity in his section of the *Roman de la Rose* (c. 1269–78). Reason's protracted description of Fortune borrows imagery and language from Alain, such as the unique expression "sartorial orphan," but its tone and focus on excess are similar to that of the Pseudo-Boethius *De disciplina* written earlier in the same century. The oft-cited passage revels in its own languorous amplification of Fortune's changing aesthetic:

quant el veut estre honoree, / si se tret en la part doree / de sa meson, et
la sejourne: / lors pare son cors et atorne, / et se vest, conme une reïne, / de
grant robe qui li treïne, / de toute diverses ouleurs, / de mout desguisees
couleurs / qui sunt es saies et es laines / selonc les herbes et les graines /
et selonc autre choses maintes / don les draperies sunt taintes / don toutes
riches genz se vestent / qui por honeurs avoir s'aprestent. / Ainsinc Fortune
se desguise, / mes bien te di qu'ele ne prise / tretouz cels du monde un festu
/ quant voit son cors ainsinc vestu, / ainz est tant orgueilleuse et fiere / qu'il
n'est orgueilleux qui s'i aferre . . . Puis va tant roant par sa sale / qu'el entre
en la partie sale, / foible, decrevee et crolant, / o toute sa roe volant. / Lors
va çoupant et jus se boute / ausinc con s'el n'i veïst goute; / et quant iluec
se voit cheuë, / sa chiere et son habit remue, / et si se desnue et desrobe /
qu'el est orfeline de robe / et semble qu'el n'ait riens vaillant, / tant li vont

tuit bien defaillant. / Et quant el voit la meschaance, / si quiert honteuse chevichance / et se vet au bordel cropir, / pleine de deul et de sopir. / La pleure a lermes espandues / les granz honeurs qu'el a perdues / et les deliz ou ele estoit / quant des granz robes se vestoit.

[When she wants to be honoured, she betakes herself to the golden part of her house and remains there, adorning and beautifying her body, dressing herself like a queen, in a long robe that trails behind her and is variously scented and brightly coloured, as silks and woolens can be, depending on the plants and seeds and many other things used to dye the clothes worn by all rich people who are preparing to receive honours. So Fortune disguises herself, but I tell you truly when she sees her person attired in this way, she gives not a straw for anyone in the world but is so proud and haughty that there is no pride to be compared with hers . . . Then, with her wheel all flying, she goes turning through the house until she comes to the part that is dirty and ramshackle, cracked and tottering. Then she stumbles and falls to the ground as if completely blind, and, seeing herself fallen there, she changes her appearance and her dress, denuding and stripping herself to such an extent that she is bereft of clothes, so lacking in goods that she seems to have nothing of worth. When she sees this misfortune, she looks for a shameful way out, and betakes herself to a brothel, where she lies, sighing and lamenting. There she sheds floods of tears over the great honours that she has lost and the delights she enjoyed when she used to wear fine clothes.]²⁶

In this portrait of Fortune's melodramatic attire and circumstances we are made to witness fashion's performative capabilities, the "theatrical logic of excess and exaggeration" that helps establish the thirteenth-century fashion system and that makes up Heller's criterion number six.²⁷ But we also glimpse a more private medieval experience regarding Fortune's goods, a psychological process of self-study that is explicitly linked to the practice of fashioning the self with material goods. Both the wealthy, scented, adorned Fortune and the stripped, prostituted, abject Fortune in this passage rely on the power of the self-gaze—what Lipovetsky calls fashion's "aesthetic self-observation" and what Michael Camille calls the courtly woman's process of "self-spectacularization"—to calculate her sartorially appropriate status.²⁸ When she *sees* the riches that adorn her ["quant el voit ses granz richeces" (6109)], she is haughty and prideful; similarly, when she *sees* her fallen and misfortunate states ["quant iluec se voit cheüe" (6121); "quant el voit la meschaance" (6423)], she embraces the attire and status of the forsaken.

This passage implies that processes of aesthetic self-observation are inherently linked to social imitation; Fortune dresses herself *like* a queen [comme une reine], and her variety of scents and colors is representative of how *all* rich people dress themselves [don toutes riches genz se vestent]. This portrait of a pluralized, imitative, mutable aesthetic practice is underscored by Jean's reduplication of similar images and sounds, such as in the lines "de toute diverses ouleurs, / de mout desguisees couleurs" (6095–96), and in the simultaneous threefold stripping away that we are asked to envision: "et si se desnue et desrobe / qu'el est orfeline de robe" (6123–24). A central conceit in this passage is "disguise": Fortune is said to disguise not only the colors of her dress but also her very self: "[a]insinc Fortune se desguise" (6103). The primary meaning of this word in medieval French and English differed from our leading sense today, which rests in the deception and concealment of identity. In the medieval period the word carried a more literal sense of *des-guiser*: an 'offing' of a particular style or a change from one's usual appearance; as a term for changing one's style it became a keyword in discourses about fashion in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century France and England.²⁹ Ironically, in changing her attire to more adequately reflect her circumstances, as she does when she sees herself fallen in the decrepit part of her house and subsequently strips herself of clothing, on some level Fortune appears to be following the aesthetic logic of decorum privileged in high-medieval culture: that is, in overtly trying to match her form to her circumstance, she could be seen as trying to *avoid* the appearance of vestimentary deception. Read in this light, Jean's Fortune might be seen as a parody not only of the numerous variety of clothes worn by the very rich, whom she overtly imitates, but also of the cultural standard by which any significant change of financial status would necessitate a public upgrading or downgrading of sumptuary variety. As Heller has pointed out, a French sumptuary law that was enacted in 1279, the year after Jean finished his completion of the *Roman de la Rose*, focuses its attention on exactly this issue, regulating dress according to "how many changes of clothes per year persons of each rank were allowed."³⁰

While Jean de Meun's description of Fortune clearly comments in a variety of ways on the general phenomenon of vestimentary changeability in his culture, by describing the ways that Fortune adorns herself, admires herself, undresses herself, and disparages herself behind closed doors, it also humanizes and individualizes the goddess. As E. Jane Burns puts it, "[i]t is an elaborately dressed *lady* named Fortune" that we are made to see here.³¹ If we compare the above passage with a later passage in the same text, we can see how Fortune's spectacle of dressing and undressing works as a precursor for other types of sartorial stripping and redressing based more overtly in the

minutiae of contemporary stylistic distinction. Pygmalion's obsessive refashioning of his sculpture/lady near the end of the *Roman de la Rose* seems to replicate in a more microscopic scale Fortune's earlier impulses, distinguishing different sartorial "guises" according to price, color, region, and even religion:

Puis li revest en maintes guises / robes fetes par granz mestris / de blans dras de soëve laine, / d'escallate, de tirtaine, / de vert, de pers et de brunette, / de couleur fresche, fine et nete, / ou mout a riches panes mises, / erminees, veres et grises. / Puis les li roste, et puis ressaie / con li siet bien robe de saie, / cendauz, melequins, hatebis, / indes, vermeuz, jaunes e bis, / samiz, diapres, kameloz. . . . Autre foiz li met une guimple, / et par desus un queuvrechief / qui queuvre la guimple et le chief; / mes ne queuvre pas le visage, / qu'il ne veust pas tenir l'usage / des Sarradins.

[He would dress her in different ways, in robes fashioned with great skill from soft white wool, from scarlet cloth or linsey woolsey, from cloth of green or blue, or rich dark stuff, in colours that were fresh and fine and bright, richly furred with ermine, miniver, and squirrel. Then he would take them off again, to see how well she looked in a robe of silk, sendal, tabby, or other precious stuffs, in indigo, vermilion, yellow, or brown, in samite, diapered fabric, or camlet . . . Sometimes he would attire her in a wimple, with a kerchief to cover the wimple and the head, but not the face, for he had no wish to imitate the habit of the Saracens.]³²

The description of the statue's changes of clothing continues in this vein for approximately a hundred lines, adding both more outfits and more exquisite details, such as the number of stones Pygmalion picks from the seashore to place in the precious purse which he hangs from her expensive girdle, why he chooses not to dress her feet in Parisian boots, and how snugly he sews her sleeves with golden thread. Like Fortune's earlier dressing scene, which humanizes her, the clothing changes here bring the statue one step closer to life; in fact, it is directly following this scene that Pygmalion finally prays to Venus to make his artwork into a real woman, and is obliged. In a stunning inversion of the process of reification, here we see a process in which consumer goods and changes of fashion actually help to convert an object into a living human being.³³

Together these two passages situate the cultural discourse of thirteenth-century fashion and consumption in relation to the question of the gendered, objectifying gaze—the male gaze versus the female self-gaze—and, beneath

the question of visual allure, to the question of gendered legal ownership and usage of material goods. This subject gets taken up more directly in Chaucer's version of Fortune, as I will discuss in the next section, and in a different way in the power struggles displayed in Griselda's clothing that I will discuss in chapter 4. Yet in Jean's early portrayal of Fortune's process of self-fashioning we can begin to see Fortune's instructive value as a figure for individual consumer behavior and consumer power. Ultimately, what Jean offers us is a lady whose self-fashioning manifests a form of free will: a woman who follows her own material whims according to what and when she *wants*—*quant el veut*, as the excerpt begins. If the figure of Fortune herself, rather than her control over others, seems an unlikely model for exploring the question of human free will, we need only be reminded that one of her foundational characteristics has always been her ability to do exactly as she likes without any responsibility to the rules of human order and justice. As her representation becomes more humanized and particularized in its own relation to material goods, she begins to present a recognizable form of material self-determination that corresponds more directly to medieval regulatory efforts regarding the consumption of material goods.

REGULATING FORTUNE'S *MANERE* IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Moving to fourteenth-century England and to a writer deeply influenced by both Alain de Lille and Jean de Meun, we see Chaucer take up these themes directly by writing a poem that challenges Fortune's material excesses and mutability in a court of law. His short Boethian poem known as "Fortune" situates the personified goddess as the defendant against which a "pleintif" makes a series of legal complaints regarding the disorder and "transmutacioun" (1) of the world governed by Fortune's "errour" (4) and experienced through her variable goods: through "wele or wo, now povre and now honour" (2). In this poem we see a protagonist who takes up the practical mantle of *De disciplina scholarium*, using his "resoun" (9) and moderation to resist Fortune's cycle of plenty and dearth: "My suffisaunce shal be my socour," he says, "For fynally Fortune, I thee defye" (15–16).

The judicial setting of the poem allows Chaucer to update the twofold nature of the consolatory genre, in which the complainant's own statements are often used to undermine his grievances. Thus even as he lists her crimes, Chaucer's plaintiff himself inadvertently reveals some of the benefits of Fortune's vacillations, the primary one being the way he can distinguish Fortune's

friends from his own by their “negardye in keping hir richesse” (53). As this verse suggests, whereas Chaucer’s poem certainly makes a gesture of reaching to philosophical heights—by having the plaintiff invoke Socrates’ wisdom and antimaterialism to strengthen his own, for example—it also clearly ushers the notion of Fortune’s power over worldly goods into a more materially inclined fourteenth-century context. It is by now commonplace to say that the period in which Chaucer wrote was a time of intense development and reassessment of trade, industry, and credit economy—the culmination of a veritable “commercial revolution” whose social and ideological frictions are played out in the texts of the late fourteenth century.³⁴ Fortune’s problematic symbolic function in this material context is demonstrated by her mixed purpose in this poem: while the plaintiff presents a case for restricting Fortune’s excesses, using her bad governance as a metaphor for excessive royal expenditure, and while the plaintiff also claims to want to “defye” Fortune by gaining “maystrye” (14) over himself, the poem also demonstrates the more specific material agenda of a begging poem, first in its repeated focus on the material generosity of one true but unnamed Boethian “frend” (50), and then more directly in its envoy, in which Fortune herself turns around to beg for sovereign gifts for the plaintiff-speaker.

In Chaucer’s “Fortune” the goddess is presented first and foremost as an allegorized queen, but as in Jean de Meun’s poem, she is also a human figure caught up in contemporary vices such as profligacy and extravagance. Her decadent compulsions and those of her followers implicitly form the context of her trial, which depicts her plaintiff-subject as desperate to regulate her: “Woltow than make a statut on thy quene / That I shal been ay at thyn ordinaunce?” (43–44), Fortune quips to her accuser. Some time ago Aage Brusendorff proposed that the regulatory frame of this poem should be specifically read in response to the 1390 Ordinance of the Privy Council of Richard II, which attempted to drastically regulate royal gifts. While the specifics of this thesis have been called into question, Brusendorff’s general reading of the poem as a comment on contemporary debates about royal consumption has obvious merit.³⁵ Chaucer provides a clear connection between Fortune’s wealth and royal wealth, so that the Boethian notion regarding Fortune’s ownership of all goods corresponds in Chaucer’s poem to the feudal system in which the sovereign ruler, likewise, is commonly understood to be the godlike owner of all property.³⁶ In truth, Fortune says at the end of the poem, God is the one with true property, heaven’s “propretee of siker-nesse” (69), whereas her own “intresse” (71)—“interest,” both situational and financial—lasts only as long as the plaintiff’s last day in the world. Whereas Boethius strove to situate Fortune’s instability within the system of divine

providence and order, however, Chaucer's attempt to bring Fortune's material vacillations to justice means that he must actively distinguish her goods from divine goods. He thus claims that while Fortune is often mistaken for divine "majestee" (65), this misperception is initiated by "blinde bestes ful of lewednesse" (68). It follows that Chaucer would confine the classic Boethian phrase about Fortune's power over material goods with a further reference to her royalty; his Fortune states: "Thou pinchest at my mutabilitee / For I thee lente a drope of my richesse, / And now me lyketh to withdrawe me" (57–59), to which Chaucer adds the line "Why sholdestow my realtee oppresse?"—[why should you oppress my royalty?] (60). Supplementing this apparent commentary on the contemporary battle for control over royal *richesse* is the envoy of the poem, which is addressed to "princes" and which recasts the unfortunate plaintiff of the poem as a complainant in need of sovereign gifts.

If Chaucer's subtext in his only poem entirely devoted to Fortune implies its interest in notions of both judicial and extrajudicial control over goods in the feudal system, its overtly purported topic ties these elements once again to the theme of Fortune's ornamental powers: the frequent title of the poem in manuscript form is not the modern title "Fortune," but "Balades de Visage sanz Peinture," or "Ballads on a face without painting."³⁷ Ornament, the *Consolatio* teaches us, conceptually speaks to the paradox of material freedom, and thus it makes sense that it would have a place in this poem's discussion about the attempt to regulate material freedoms of various sorts. Ornament came under the scrutiny of the English court system in a literal sense through the sumptuary law of 1363, which prohibited certain clothing materials, styles, and accoutrements according to social status and income. In attempting to restrict sartorial self-expression according to socioeconomic hierarchies, this law effectively outlined a spectrum of sartorial self-fashioning in which the wealthiest aristocrats enjoyed almost complete freedom of aesthetic self-expression, being told to "wear at their pleasure" [*usent a lour volunte*] and, correspondingly, in which each lesser socioeconomic group was marked by increased aesthetic limitations, upon threat of forfeiture, according to their "estat & degree."³⁸ Unlike the French sumptuary laws at the end of the previous century, this law does not define vestimentary status according to the number of changes of clothes one is allowed to wear per year, but rather according to the cost of the materials of which the garments are made and the kinds of ornaments that adorn them. The fraught subject of changing and distinctive sartorial styles is captured by the 1363 statute's overuse of the French word "manere"—used primarily to mean "after the fashion of"—which is used roughly fifteen times in the statutes on dress and negligibly in

the accompanying statutes.³⁹ In the passage on the attire of lesser esquires, for example, several ornaments are listed by name, while the numerous styles and uses of embroidered and furred garments are subsumed under the prohibition of all ‘manner’ of these materials: “ne qils ne usent drap dor de seye ne dargent, ne nule manere de vesture enbroidez, anel, fermaile, nouche dor, rubayn seynture, ne null autre apparaill ne herneys dor ne dargent, ne riens de perre, de nule manere de pellure” [and that they wear no cloth of gold, nor silk, nor silver, nor no manner of clothing embroidered, ring, buttons, nor brooch of gold, ribbon, girdle, nor none other apparel, nor armor of gold nor of silver, nor nothing of stone nor no manner of fur].⁴⁰ The rhetorical attempt to bring stasis to changeable vestimentary forms is also expressed through the long list of negated ornaments in this passage, which has a powerful aesthetic effect of its own, and which one might compare to Chaucer’s arresting negative anaphora in his Boethian lyric “Former Age,” based on the previously discussed poem II.m.5, in which Chaucer quantifies through repeated grammatical negation the excesses of contemporary life. Two of Chaucer’s anaphoric lines in this poem address fourteenth-century dyeing processes: “No madder, welde, or wood no limestere [dyer] / Ne knew; the flees was of his former hewe.”⁴¹

Thus, in a cultural gesture similar to that of Chaucer’s “Balades de Visage sanz Peinture” and “Former Age,” the sumptuary statute of 1363 endeavored to regulate material changeability itself, attempting to halt and reverse social mobility and aesthetic change by legislating official categories of stable visual adornment. This regulation failed in a practical sense; it was repealed the year after it was written, and a parliamentary petition to create a similar statute in 1378–79 was denied by King Richard.⁴² Moreover, as Claire Sponsler has argued, the long lists of objects *not* allowed to lower members of society in this statute counteracted the statute’s ostensible purposes, effectively generating a more targeted consumer appetite for specific prohibited goods rather than suppressing their use; I would add, this phenomenon was no doubt heightened by the statute’s unwitting designation of sartorial self-fashioning as the ultimate symbol of material freedom.⁴³ While Chaucer’s judicial portrayal of Fortune’s stripping of her ornament, her face *sanz peinture*, in the early 1380s most likely had no direct correlation with the legal forfeiture of outlawed garments dictated by these statutes, each text implicitly places similar pressure on the material and literary tropes of social mobility. Whereas the sumptuary law regulates the “outrageouse & excessive apparaill des plusours gentz, contre lour estate & degree” [the outrageous and excessive apparel of divers people, against their estate and degree], for example, Chaucer’s poem ends with the striking suggestion that its complaints against

Fortune's excesses may enable the speaker's own socioeconomic advancement, making it possible, in Fortune's words, "[t]hat to som betere estate he may atteyne" (79).⁴⁴

The literary motif of Fortune's concealment through dyes, paints, rouges, and other materials was a favorite of Chaucer's, and it seems to have originated in a passage spoken by Philosophy at the beginning of Book II of the *Consolatio* when she first introduces the topic of the "multiform" goddess: *Intellego multiformes illius prodigii fucos* (II.pr.1.3), a phrase that Chaucer translates in the *Boece* as "I undirstonde the felefolde [manifold] colours and desceytes of thilke merveyulous monstre Fortune" (II.pr.1.14–16). "Colour" in this period connotes not only stylistic devices, but also literal "coloring matter" such as pigments and dyes, and thus implicitly corresponds to the use of "peinture" (which also means "pigment or dye, paint, coloring matter") in the title of his Boethian poem on Fortune.⁴⁵ The twofold meaning of Fortune's "peinture" or "colour" is clear in the poem; Chaucer's reference to Socrates as knowing well "the deceit of hir colour" (21) and the poem's central distinction between "[f]rend of effect and frend of countenance" (34) both rely on the play between rhetorical and material deception. In this manner the poem underscores Chaucer's interest in the transformative power of clothing dyes, a trope inherited not only from Boethius's use of Tyrian dyes and purple clothes as prime examples of coveted luxury goods in the *Consolatio* (for example, II.m.5.9), but also from Trevet's previously mentioned commentary on this text, which spends a significant amount of time elucidating Boethius's trope, most evocatively when it seizes on the double meaning of Boethius's term *venenum* as both "dye" and "poison" to evocatively associate dyed cloth with blackened, poisoned bodies.⁴⁶ As scholars have pointed out, Chaucer's own exploration of this theme in the previously mentioned lyric "Former Age," which circulated alongside his "Balades de Visage sanz Peinture" in medieval manuscripts, suggests specific concerns about imported consumer goods and the industrial abuses of contemporary English dyeing processes as well as about the general perception that dyed cloth 'taints' its subjects with the mark of *covetyse*.⁴⁷

Chaucer borrows heavily from his French predecessors in his various descriptions of Fortune, but his portrayals almost always scrutinize in a particularly Chaucerian way the material territory of the subject. In the same passage from his *Boece* mentioned above, Chaucer, like Guillaume de Machaut, translates Boethius's *prodigium* as "monstre," and in doing so is one of the first to introduce the word to English readers.⁴⁸ But unlike Machaut, Chaucer reduplicates the characteristics of Boethius's *prodigium*: her *fuci*—paints, rouges—are not merely "colours" but "colours and desceytes"; she is

not merely a prodigy, but a “mervelous monster”: a marvelous marvel, a monstrous monster, an ominous omen. Fortune’s phenomenology, therefore, is material and quantifiable: as a monster (from Lat. *monstrare*, “to show,” *monere*, “to warn”), she shows or warns us, but in a doubly material way.

This doubling can be seen in Chaucer’s somewhat unique inclusion of a mirror as part of Fortune’s symbolic accoutrements in his poem. In the *Roman de la Rose*, as I discuss above, Fortune expressly invokes the power of the self-gaze, watching herself as she dresses in luxury goods and as she plunges from vestimentary riches to poverty. In Chaucer’s “Balades de Visage sanz Peinture,” this practice materializes in the form of a marvelous object, a mirror possessed by Fortune that can distinguish true friends from false ones: as the plaintiff puts it, he must learn “[t]o knowen frend fro fo in thy mirour” (10). This description derives from a passage in Boethius’s *Consolatio* that explicitly discusses the goddess’s powers in terms of feigned countenances: first Fortune “uncovers” herself (*aperire* [II.pr.8.1]) and then the protagonist’s friends; in the words of Chaucer’s *Boece*: “this ilke Fortune hath departed and uncovered to the bothe the certein visages and eek the doutous visages of thi felawes” (II.pr.8.36–39).⁴⁹ While the mirror is said to distinguish one’s true friends, and also clearly invokes Fortune’s own changeable countenance as suggested by the title of the work, a mirror is, first and foremost, a luxury object meant for seeing oneself, rather than others. As such it underscores the important suggestion that Fortune can reveal one’s own self-deception as well as the deceit of others, a concept whose importance to Chaucer is evidenced by the fact that he added this notion as one of the few supplements to his sources in his version of II.m.5 in the *Boece*, when he describes how the people of the first age “ne distroyede *nor deceived* nat hemself with outrage” (II.m.5.3–5).

Chaucer’s interest in Fortune’s material doubling implicitly questions her symbolic function, investigating whether she is a figure for the external changes that one experiences through material goods, as Boethius suggests, or a figure for the material fashioning of the self, as we see in Jean de Meun. While “Balades de Visage sanz Peinture” rests on the notion that she paints *herself*, the *Merchant’s Tale*, for example, depicts her monstrosity in her ability to paint her *gifts*: “[o] monstre, that so subtilly kanst peynte / Thy yiftes under hewe of stidefastnesse” (CT 4.2062–63), says the tale’s narrator in an apostrophe just prior to January’s sudden blindness and subsequent cuckolding. Chaucer likewise encapsulates Fortune’s dyadic ornamental powers over both others and herself in the following lines from her extended description in the *Book of the Duchess*:

An ydole of fals portrayture
 Ys she, for she wol sone wrien;
 She is the monstres hed ywrien,
 As fylthe over-ystrawed with floures.
 (626–29)

Chaucer's most significant addition to this passage, which borrows heavily from Machaut's Motet VIII, consists of his depiction of the twofold nature of Fortune's change: playing on the double meaning of the dogmatically English word *wrien* to mean alternately "to turn" and "to cover, clothe, or adorn," he inextricably connects Fortune's ability to turn (her spinning wheel or her face) with her disguised appearance.⁵⁰ Here likewise Chaucer alludes to Fortune's confused agency as a simultaneous executor and object of change: on the one hand she actively turns the wheel, *wrien*, and on the other she is an object upon which unnamed others perform (past-participial) actions: her head is *covered* (*ywrien*); and her filth is *covered over* (*over-ystrawen*) with flowers.

In following Machaut's emphasis on Fortune's idolatrous nature in this passage, Chaucer further scrutinizes her problematic agency, for idolatry inherently concerns both adornment, in the sense that idolatry, or image-making, had been associated with (especially female) cosmetics since the patristic fathers, and also the status of objects themselves.⁵¹ In this period idolatry encompassed both the worship of crafted objects—Pygmalion was a favorite medieval example of idolatry—and the more mundane act of coveting things: Chaucer's Parson repeatedly states that "an avaricious man is the thraldom of ydolatrie" (*CT* 10.747). Chaucer further complicates this notion in the above passage from the *Book of the Duchess*, however, by suggesting that Fortune is an "ydole" because she, unlike the true, changeless God, will "sone" change (626–27). This observation puts pressure on the question of Fortune's criminal changeability, in effect asking whether her main crime is that she is an *object* that represents the worship of objects, or that she is an object that can transform itself, thus upending the definition of object. If the latter, Fortune's changeability again appears to pose questions about the potential agency acquired by similarly objectified, reified subjects.

Chaucer engages these questions in a new way in the short poem titled "Against Women Unconstant" by modern editors.⁵² In this poem Chaucer associates late-medieval women's consumer behavior with Fortune's stereotypical characteristics. For instance, the narrator addresses a certain unnamed "madam's" distinctive instability in the familiar terms of idolatry ("Ye might

be shryned for your brotelnesse" [15]); he claims that her "werkes" will bear witness that things come and go but never stay for long in her "mirour" (10; 8); and he describes her as changing her mind "as a wedercok, that turneth his face / With every wind" (12–13). While the poet ostensibly speaks here of the lady's discarded lovers, the metaphors he chooses are overwhelmingly consumer-oriented: she loves "newefangelnesse" (1); her desire is always for "newe thing[s]" (6); when she loses one thing (or one lover?), she can buy two more: "ye can wel tweyn purchase" (19). The lady's changing garments generate the main imagery and the refrain for the poem: "In stede of blew, thus may ye were al grene." This sartorial shift from steadfast blue to capricious green echoes an earlier poem by Machaut, and its powerful draw as a trope is suggested by its repeated imitation by later medieval writers, as I will discuss in the next section.⁵³ This refrain is not the only vestimentary conceit used to describe the lady's changeability: the last image before the final refrain introduces another, in which the lady is said to have discarded her winter woollens for her summer weeds ("Al light for somer (ye woot wel what I mene)" [20]), an image that Chaucer uses to great effect in his "Proverbe" and that I have discussed at length in my introduction. While "Against Women Unconstant" does not mention Fortune directly, it hardly needs to; in depicting a lady whose "lust" for "newe thing[s]" (6) manifests in mutable, changing colors and garments on several fronts, the poem offers itself as the fourteenth-century conclusion to Jean de Meun's earlier humanizing of the goddess: here, it is not Fortune who takes up the material markers of fashionable women, but a fashionable woman who has taken on the material characteristics of Fortune.

WEARING FORTUNE'S GARMENTS IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The color-change motif that provides the refrain for Chaucer's poem becomes more central to later figurations of Fortune than the earlier trope in which Fortune displayed manifold changes of garments themselves. While the notion of Fortune's 'robe of many colors' existed as early as Boccaccio, writers in the fifteenth century greatly expanded the image, vividly imagining Fortune's garment as a veritable rainbow of colors that fluctuated according to her mood.⁵⁴ Lydgate leads the way with the sheer quantity and range of his examples, as in the following description from the *Fall of Princes*:

Hir habit was of manyfold colours,

Watchet bleuh [light blue] of feyned stedfastnesse,
 Hir gold allaied like sonne in wattri shours,
 Meynt with liht greene for chaung & doubilnesse.
 A pretens red: dreed meynt with hardynesse;
 Whiht for clenness, lik soone for to faille;
 Feynte blak for moornyng, russet for trauaille.
 (VI.i.43–49)⁵⁵

Lydgate's description presents Fortune's myriad colors as largely diluted or simulated: her gown is "watchet" or light blue, "liht greene," and "feynte" black; the colors are mixed ("meynte") or feigned ("feyned"; "pretens"); the gold is "alloyed" with a base metal. Not only are the colors of her garment always changing but also their mixed state inherently compromises and debases their quality. The passage artfully straddles literary tradition and fifteenth-century material culture. It invokes the allegorical trope of the multi-colored garment used by earlier writers and at the same time gestures toward the fashion-conscious markets and courts of medieval England, where, by the time Lydgate was writing, all the colors listed—blue, gold, green, red, white, black, and various multicolored fabrics—were available for purchase.⁵⁶ Lydgate's allusion to Fortune's mixed or contaminated colors speaks on the one hand to its Boethian inheritance, the aforementioned cloth-dyeing trope that both Boethius and Chaucer associate with rhetorical and material corruption, and on the other to contemporary consumer appetite for new colors and color combinations, which changed rapidly and dramatically as the fifteenth century progressed.⁵⁷ "Colored" cloth being another name for dyed (versus nondyed) cloth, Fortune's colored garments strike here at the very heart of late-medieval vestimentary consumption.

Fortune's specific colors mark her as a particular type of consumer in other ways as well. Because of its association with "chaung & doubilnesse," green was the color used most often to link fickle character with fickle consumer practices; in his misogynist tour de force "Examples Against Women," Lydgate describes the disloyal Delilah, like the lady in Chaucer's "Against Women Unconstant," as shunning blue clothing, which is "stedfast & clene" (76), in favor of "thynges newe" (74) and "chaungis of many dyvers grene" (77). The color green was beginning to have another important association, however, one glimpsed in Lydgate's description of Fortune in yet another poem as wearing a changeable gown of "gawdy grene":

Hyr whele was redy to turne without let.
 Hyr gowne was of gawdy grene chamelet,

Chaungeable of sondry dyuerse colowres,
 To the condycyons accordyng of hyr shoures.
 ("Assembly of Gods," 319–22)

Camlet was a costly fabric from the Near East, and in a technical sense the phrase "gawdy grene" describes a yellowish green dye made from weld, a dye that Chaucer singles out in his short poem "Former Age" as one of the symbols of England's commercial saturation and degradation.⁵⁸ The overlapping meanings of Middle English forms of "gaude" and "gaudi," however—which denote trickery and artifice as well as ornamentation, finery, baubles, and fripperies—implies that in Lydgate's time the word's meaning was well on its way to taking on the modern sense of gaudy as meaning "excessively showy."⁵⁹ Perhaps following Machaut's and Chaucer's use of the green garment as a symbol for changeability, Lydgate's self-portrait in the *Siege of Thebes* presents himself as modestly dressed "[i]n a Cope of blak / and not of grene" (73): that is, in the traditional black cope of the Benedictine monk, rather than in a fashionable green cope worn by fickle, materialistic people.⁶⁰

Fortune's bicolored appearance in late-medieval manuscripts aligned her with one of the most prevalent color-oriented stylistic choices of late-medieval Europe, the parti-colored garment (see figure 2.3). This alternately white/black, and natural/dyed symbolism of Fortune was an evocative way to portray her aesthetic duality and her capriciousness, as bicolored attire was a novel fashion that, like stripes, privileged an unruly aesthetic that had previously been associated with criminal types.⁶¹ Culturally, however, bicolored garments were also understood through association with royal retinues, who were often clothed in bicolored livery with personal emblems, such as the "F" letters embroidered—for *Fortuna*—on Fortune's gown in figure 2.3.⁶² As Paul Strohm has shown, the social unrest caused by personal retinues and rival factions meant that liveries themselves were commonly associated with lawlessness and disorder.⁶³ They were therefore particularly apt symbols for Fortune both because they projected her unruliness and because they materialized a trope already associated with her figure: that of adorning her favorites in luxurious clothing.

The most striking fifteenth-century example linking Fortune to changing fashions, and my final example here, is found in Charles, duke of Orléans's long poem in English, *Fortunes Stabilnes*. A member of the French royal family who was captured at the battle of Agincourt in 1415, Charles wrote the ambitious Boethian poem during his twenty-five-year captivity as a prisoner of war in England, and it was most likely circulated among the courtly households of his English "keepers" during this period.⁶⁴ As Susan Crane has



Figure 2.3 A fifteenth-century manuscript of Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* depicts Fortune in parti-colored garments ornamented with F's for *Fortuna* (c. 1477). A prosperous family is situated next to the white side of the dress and a poor family next to the black side. © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. London, British Library, MS Harley 4336, fol. 1v.

discussed, Charles used fashion in a particularly expressive way throughout his life, sewing poetic mottos onto his clothing as a young man in France, and wearing signature black garments from the age of fourteen, when his father was murdered, and throughout his captivity in England.⁶⁵

Charles uses his own reputation for sartorial distinction in the fictionalized narrative of *Fortunes Stabilnes*. In a scene that helps to set up the sartorial symbolism of Fortune's entrance, the first-person narrator (also named Charles, duke of Orléans) is prompted by Venus to describe how he lives: "But how lede you yowre lijf?" (4801). He answers in vestimentary terms: "As an ancre [hermit], Madame, in clothis blake" (4802). Venus comments on his recent change in appearance, trying to interpret its social significance: "So thynkith me ye haue professioun take / Or ellis ye cast to fonde sum ordir newe, / For strike ye are from Rossett out and blewe" (4803–5). Charles replies that he wears his colors inward—the "rosett" of his heart is dressed in "blew," in which his painful thoughts are wrapped in "tawny" (4808, 4807, 4811)—and then states his intention to remain in black for the rest of his life: "And to my deth in blak my silf y bide" (4812). The narrator goes on to imply that this choice of dress signifies the death of his unnamed beloved lady, an explanation that might have surprised readers who knew of Charles's own unique use of the color black as a symbol of his father's death. Unlike Lydgate's self-portrait in *Siege of Thebes*, therefore, where the black garment does signify his "ordir" as a Benedictine monk, Charles's black garment seems to generate varied meanings, and therefore, as Venus's hermeneutic confusion reveals, to be more open to multiple interpretations. Black was from the end of the fourteenth century and throughout the first half of the fifteenth century an extremely fashionable color to wear among aristocrats, well liked for its ability to throw into relief shiny metallic ornaments, bright brocades, and colorful linings, and particularly dramatic in portraits.⁶⁶ Even as Charles portrays his aesthetic as distinct and invariable, therefore, it would clearly have held currency in fashionable circles. Perhaps in describing his thoughts as colorfully dressed and "covert" (4809) beneath his black exterior, for example, Charles was making a reference to the use of multiple colors in the interior linings of his dark attire.

The narrator's invariable black attire prepares the aesthetic landscape for Fortune's extraordinary mutability of colors. Of the thirteen stanzas devoted exclusively to Fortune's physical appearance in the poem, Charles uses eleven to describe her clothing. And just as he focuses the reader's attention on questions of interpretation regarding his narrator's attire, so his description of Fortune demonstrates a heightened attention to hermeneutic processes:

That forto say yow how she ware hir gere
 Hit was ydoon hardly at poynt devise,
 And if that y shall say you what sche were—
 But, verry god, me þouȝt it passyng nyse
 (All though it riche were of a wondir prise!)
 For euyrmore the coloure gan to chaunge,
 So semyd me hir surcot verry straunge,

For the body was kowchid thorough & thorough
 As euyrmore a Saphir and a balayse,
 That to biholde it, as y tolde yow now,
 So as the playtis vp and downe arayse,
 So did dyuerse the hewe in sondry wise,
 For, though on wey the Safir shewid blew,
 This way the balise geveth a purpil hew.
 (4974–87)

As he introduces the goddess, the narrator makes a point of distinguishing his own two-tiered reaction to her clothing. He takes care to illustrate that his first instinct, and the expectation he presumes for “yow” his reader, is to describe *how* Fortune wears her attire: “how she ware hir gere.” The phrasing implies an interesting cultural preference for descriptions of vestimentary style and mode of display and suggests the role that literary narratives might have played in circulating new methods of self-fashioning to eager courtly audiences. Charles’s second and equally important object is to explain the garments themselves: *how* she wears her clothing, he insists, is nothing compared to *what* she wears, “what sche were.” Whereas her overall appearance suggests scrupulous attention to detail, “poynt devyse,” the items that she wears, he says, strike him as utterly extraordinary, “passynge nyse.”

“Nyse” was a word also used in fifteenth-century England to connote the more “ordinary” vice of sartorial self-indulgence, and Charles’s subsequent description of Fortune’s attire takes care, even as it enumerates her extraordinary garments, to suggest that her “verry straunge” clothing has modern-day explanations.⁶⁷ The unusual *surcote* (or sideless gown) in the passage above, for example, whose “vp” and “downe” movement and changing colors appear to mirror the movement of Fortune’s wheel, actually proves to be a trick of the eye: the material, says Charles, is studded with sapphires and balas rubies in such a way that the movement of the folds of the dress causes the color to look blue one moment and purple the next. Later we find out that the

surcoat's ermine trim is also in fact a more modest material, the gauze-like "plesaunce" (4990), finely pleated and set with ornamental eyes. As he describes at length Fortune's marvelous garments, Charles strives over and over to add realistic explanations, most often including detail about the *making* of the garment: various forms of "make" or "wrought" are sprinkled generously throughout the long passage (4990, 5006, 5007, 5011, 5023), including the specific detail that the lining of her mantle is "with nedill wrought" (5016). The garments are also repeatedly described as "praty," or well made (5010, 5017). Like her surcoat, Fortune's mantle seems magically to change color, but here again, Charles asks the reader to consider more closely the materials from which the garment is made:

Of which the coloure blak nor grene it nas
 But most lijk to a raynbow hewe it was,
 Forwhi the silkis were so verry straunge
 That ay from blew to reed or grene þei chaunge.
 (4998–5001)

As Mary-Jo Arn points out in the notes to her edition of this text, Charles seems to refer here to shot silk (aptly called *changeant* in French), a popular fabric in this period that created a changeable, iridescent effect by using different colors for the warp-threads and weft-threads of a fabric.⁶⁸ Other aspects of Fortune's garment point toward their materials and craftsmanship in similar ways: the elaborately "wrought" (5007) images of changing clouds and waxing and waning moons correspond to the fashion for embroidered heraldic mantles; likewise, the fluttering leaves on the border of the mantle—some fastened loosely, some firmly, according to the narrator (5014)—suggest the late-medieval penchant for dagged edges.⁶⁹ Finally, despite its ethereal composition of rainbows, clouds, moons, and "litill, litill flowris soft" (5018), the mantle as a whole betrays a hefty physicality: it is so voluminous and so heavy, says Charles, that it needs numerous cords to tie it (4996–97).

Charles's interest in examining the techniques behind Fortune's spectacularly variable attire pushes her figuration well beyond the literary trope. While his description certainly plays with the inherited idea of the goddess's twofold nature as both divine and worldly,⁷⁰ his purpose seems more to demystify Fortune's garments for his readers than to engage her poetic hybridity. Several aspects of the portrait parallel contemporary manuscript illuminations of Fortune, and at times the description reads as if Charles were examining such an illumination with the specific purpose of recre-

ating the clothing in material form.⁷¹ His description carries none of the implicit (and often explicit) disapproval in Lydgate's descriptions of sartorial excess, Fortune's or others'; on the contrary, Charles's uncovering of the tricks of the trade behind her showy appearance revels in the evident ingenuity and skill inherent in the garments his narrator witnesses. While Charles does at moments include potentially moralizing detail, such as the way Fortune's surcoat "counterfeits" ermine (4989), a keyword often used to target fashionable attire in medieval England, it is with the apparent intention of describing how *well* the technical imitation looks and performs. Such details certainly imply that, like Boethius's narrator in the opening of the *Consolatio*, the narrator of *Fortunes Stabilnes* is easily seduced by the material goods Fortune has at her command. In spite of this well-used literary trope, however, what the combined elements of Charles's portrait ultimately offer the reader is a version of Fortune's "straunge" clothing, her central signifier, that seems comprehensible, desirable, and largely *attainable*—at least, for this royal poet and his courtly audience—in its ornamental detail, purchasable materials, sensory experience, and visual effects. She is a figure of self-fashioning whose fashions work very hard to sell themselves.

The object most creative in this regard is Fortune's necklace, which is said literally to proclaim fashion's presence—"A serpe, the fasson to declare" (5022). This necklace is made ("wrought" once again [5023]) from sets of hanging, twirling, falling dice whose movements seem to help Charles the narrator better comprehend the "how" and "whi" of life:

To se them how they werle abowt
 Hit wondir was, withouten dowt,
 Whi they turnyd so many chaunsis
 And that so ful of verryaunces!
 (5026–29)

While these "whirling" dice—a word Charles perhaps borrows from line 11 of Chaucer's "Fortune"—do not replace the more traditional iconography of Fortune's wheel in this text, which is introduced along with her crown in subsequent stanzas, they do more accurately represent the larger symbolic program of Charles's portrait. On the one hand the dice, like the garments described earlier, help modernize Boethius's image of Fortune's seductive gifts: high-quality fake ermine, shot silks, and games of hazard speak more directly to the mundane excesses of late-medieval aristocratic life than do the generic garments of Boethius's text.⁷² On the other hand, this ornamental object also suggests the extent to which her figuration presents material

consumption as a—or even *the*—crucial and achievable aspect of her power. Fortune's powers over change are not merely "declared" to be fashion in this text; they are encapsulated and appropriated *by* fashion, as her most fearsome powers of transience have literally become a bauble to be worn around a lady's neck.

An important effect of this late-medieval shift in Fortune's iconography toward clothes that symbolize changeability in their colors and styles, rather than those that represent change through their disrobement or exchange, is that Fortune often loses the other side of her sartorial persona—her fallen, impoverished, poorly dressed self. The authorial tendency to avoid this symbolism of dearth culminates in Charles's text, which uniquely situates its narrative not in Fortune's *changeability*, but, as its current title suggests, in her "stabilnes." The protagonist's ironic complaints about Fortune's stability are largely generated by what he sees as his own continuous *misfortune*, which, he says, belies the notion that fortune's favors are cyclical. They also, however, apply to his figure of Fortune, whose sartorial representation, as in many of the other versions of her late-medieval figuration that I have discussed here, effectively only performs the luxurious, "fortunate" aspects of her personality, and never the fallen figure that we see so provocatively displayed in Jean de Meun's passage in the *Roman de la Rose*. Taking Fortune as a symbol for the conspicuous consumer, as I have been suggesting, we can see that this one-sided view of her consumer habits also assigns a certain paradoxical stability to the ornamented, self-fashioned subject: the idea that wearing Fortune's garments, or fashioning the self through ever-changing attire and ornament, as she does, creates a register of constancy in an otherwise inconstant world.

CONCLUSION

If fashion had become the domain of Fortune in the fifteenth century, the same cannot be said about the following centuries, in which interest in Fortune's changing dress drops off precipitously. Unlike the highly ornate illuminations of luxuriously dressed Fortune in late-medieval manuscripts, for instance, early modern print culture usually imagined Fortune as a naked or partially naked figure, usually holding a sail or cloth and standing on a boat or a ball.⁷³ In a similar way, the literary trope of glimpsing Fortune's face *sanx peinture* develops into the more provocative idea of seeing her without any clothing; as one fallen character puts it in the sixteenth-century compilation *Mirror for Magistrates*, a text conceived as a continuation of Lydgate's *Fall of*

Princes: “Wouldest thou beholde false Fortune in her kind / Note well my life so shalt thou see her naked / Ful fayre before, but toto foule behind.”⁷⁴ One possible reason for this relative lack of interest in Fortune’s fluctuating and fashionable garments is that in the early modern period many of the associations with clothing and consumption once belonging to medieval Fortune are taken on by a new personification, Fashion.

The cultural work accomplished by the figure of Fortune in its probing of the crucial link between changing clothing and self-fashioning, then, seems to be almost entirely premodern in scope, and so amplified toward the end of the medieval period that the age-old figure of Fortune becomes a type of proxy for the newest and most culturally loaded consumer practices. In her role as a figure for the self-fashioning subject who follows the vacillating tides of fashion, Fortune serves two main purposes in medieval culture. On the one hand, as many of the examples above illustrate, she is a convenient figure upon which to hang moralized castigations of luxury attire and materialism: following the lessons of Boethius’s *Consolatio* and Pseudo-Boethius’s *De disciplina scholarium*, the well-dressed person was doomed to fall quickly into rags. On the other hand, as we saw in Charles d’Orléans’s *Fortunes Stabiles* and other later works, Fortune also provided an unexpected model to readers as a human(ized) subject whose wholesale embrace of changeable goods did *not* lead to her downfall—as a subject who takes charge of her own material destiny and who remains, against all odds and expectations, obstinately stable.

THREE

The Case of the Bishop's Capa

VESTIMENTARY CHANGE AND
DIVINE LAW IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY



Sic in modum Proteos
Demutantur vestimenta;
Nec recenter est inventa
Lex metamorphoseos.

[Thus in the manner of Proteus are vestments changed;
nor is the law of metamorphosis a new discovery.]

—“Song Upon the Tailors”¹

The luxurious episcopal *capa* (cape or cope) that emerged at the center of Church ceremony in the thirteenth century came under the scrutiny of two very different texts, Bishop William Durand’s monumental liturgical treatise, the *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (*Rationale for the Divine Offices*), and a little-known macaronic satirical poem, “Song Upon the Tailors,” found in an important English miscellany, British Library, MS Harley 978. Each of these texts addresses a paradox at the heart of contemporary ecclesiastical dress, which is the way new garments worn by the clergy no longer explicitly corresponded with the traditional, often biblical prescriptions that guaranteed the authority of those very garments. As I will discuss, in their scrutiny of the inherent contradictions of fashionable religious clothing, each writer explicitly confronts the problematic existence of fashion’s systemic changeability in relationship to the ideal of divine stasis. While Durand struggles to fit contemporary changes of clerical dress into the categories outlined by Old Testament law, the anonymous satirical poet parodies both new eccle-

siastical fashions and the old allegorical methods of interpretation that try to justify them. Each text reacts in its own way to contemporary legislative energies, which strove to differentiate clerical attire from that of secular fashions largely by presenting it as stable and biblically authorized. But each text also uses the cultural trope of sartorial changeability to examine the changing methods of literary analysis itself in this period, demonstrating that trope's broad appeal to thirteenth-century writers as well as its myriad claims on thirteenth-century experience.

VESTIMENTARY CHANGE IN WILLIAM DURAND'S *RATIONALE DIVINORUM OFFICIORUM*

Canonist and liturgical writer William Durand (1230–96), the bishop of Mende from 1285 to the end of his life, wrote his monumental *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* shortly after 1286 and it quickly became what one of its modern editors calls “the definitive medieval liturgical treatise.”² A work composed of eight books that synthesizes, interprets, and allegorizes most Church laws, customs, and rituals, the *Rationale* spends an entire book on the symbolism of ecclesiastical vestments (Book III), by far the longest sustained discussion of vestments in medieval theological writings. While Durand was not the dominant force behind the substantial changes in the symbolic use of religious vestments in this period, nor behind many of the interpretations of specific vestments in his text—most of this can be attributed to Pope Innocent III—it is precisely for this reason that Durand provides, in the places where he does deviate from his sources, a telling glimpse into how an encyclopedic mind recognized and attempted to reconcile the subtle disparities between traditional Church narrative about ecclesiastical vestments and actual contemporary practices.

Moreover, while Durand's opus was not the first to provide a hermeneutics for religious ritual, the thoroughness of his organizational program meant that the work surpassed its forebears in popularity and influence.³ Each book deals sequentially and in depth with a different aspect of church symbolism, from the ornaments and furnishings of churches, to Church ministers, vestments, the Mass, feast days, divine offices, Sunday practices, and the liturgical calendar. The *Rationale's* appeal persisted despite cultural pressure from new theological methods of biblical interpretation, despite what Joseph A. Jungmann called the “crisis” of liturgical allegory in the thirteenth century caused by the achievements of scholastic theology.⁴ Even more surprisingly, the *Rationale's* impressive publication history lasts well into the

sixteenth century and past the eve of the Reformation, at which time Martin Luther denounced it by name as a work and a genre for “idle” men.⁵ Yet judging from over three hundred surviving complete medieval manuscripts and at least fifty-nine printed editions before 1614, the readership for this popular text was anything but idle. Not only was the *Rationale* one of the first books ever printed—the 1459 edition from Gutenberg’s press is the fourth book and the second nonbiblical work printed in Europe—but also its early printing history suggests a particular type of reading practice. It was the first printed book composed in a smaller “book” typeface (now termed the Durandus type) that came to be associated with private reading of classical works in contrast to the large “missal” type used for liturgical works.⁶

Dyan Elliott’s recent work on Durand’s *Rationale* in her article on vestimentary ordination and degradation in Church ritual suggests that interpretation of ecclesiastical dress, like the clothes themselves, had become “more or less stabilized” by the thirteenth century.⁷ Yet Durand’s *Rationale* depicts anything but a stable image of vestimentary symbolism. His attempt to assimilate previous interpretations of ecclesiastical dress in fact reveals significant gaps and discrepancies in the standard hermeneutics. Likewise, his attention to the traditional exegesis of individual garments replaces supposedly incontrovertible meanings with multiplicities and inconsistencies. Elliott’s study of the ecclesiastical employment of sartorial rites and symbolism to systematically construct—and deconstruct—clerical identity illustrates the profound importance of the *meaning* of clothing in this period; as she succinctly declares, in the medieval period “clothing was meant to mean.”⁸ Precisely because clothing was so culturally significant, however, the inherently slippery and pluralized nature of its symbolism was even more potentially problematic. Durand’s text explicitly confronts the process by which the meaning of clothing escapes the control of the institutions and individuals who attempt to regulate it. As the historical starting point for most ecclesiastical and secular sumptuary legislation, the thirteenth century carries the burden of this problem perhaps more than the overtly volatile sartorial discourses of later centuries.⁹

Durand’s text exhibits the strain of trying to ensure that cultural perceptions about ecclesiastical attire remain distinct from contemporary ideas about secular clothing. A glimpse at one beautifully illuminated manuscript of the *Rationale* made within decades of Durand’s death, for example, shows, at the top of the page, an accurate depiction of the vesting of a bishop, laid out sequentially in fourteen of the fifteen steps as outlined in the text by Durand, while the grotesques in the bottom margin include an ape—well

known in this period for its mimicry of humans—cavorting in its own version of religious dress (see plate 2 and figure 3.1).¹⁰ The juxtaposition of these images on the same page generates surprisingly substantive questions about the susceptibility of ecclesiastical dress to the crude imitative impulses of fashion, including the possibility that bishops, like monkeys, might merely perform their ceremonies without fully understanding them. These types of questions occasionally surface in the body of the text as well as the marginalia of Durand's work. While this kind of marginal imagery and commentary is still a long way from the dramatic appropriation of ecclesiastical dress that Stephen Greenblatt discusses, in which Renaissance players acquired and wore actual bishop's vestments on stage, the space for interpretive play evident in this illuminated manuscript of the *Rationale*, and in the liturgical text itself, suggests that the meaning of attire, especially the highly regulated attire of the Church, could be fluid and evocative.¹¹

How ecclesiastical vestments make meaning was a topic undertaken by exegetes and theologians throughout Judeo-Christian history, from Josephus and Jerome forward.¹² At the center of these writings was the allegorical (and in Christian texts, typological) understanding of the description and explanation of the Jewish high priest's attire in Exodus 28, in which God teaches Moses the craftsmanship and symbolism of Aaron's intricate garments. Yet despite the allegorical interpretation of vestments through the ages, theologians could never entirely separate for the skeptic the beauty or style of religious garments from their cultural status as commercial or luxury items. As I discuss in my introduction, Tertullian, the early Church father most famously critical of others' attachment to their clothing, was so castigated for his own change from wearing the traditional Roman toga to the more contemporary *pallium* that he gave a public speech defending the garment.¹³ Jerome's letter against the Pelagians also takes time to defend ecclesiastical dress more broadly against an accusation that will reappear throughout Church history, that "gorgeousness of apparel or ornament is offensive to God."¹⁴

Pope Innocent's *De Missarum Mysteriis* discusses priestly vestments as part of the preparation for the Mass, classifying liturgical garments according to their descriptions in Exodus and with the general typological understanding (usually called "rememorative allegory") that the vesting of the priest and his procession to the altar represents Christ entering the world (and that the rest of the Mass represents the sequential events of Christ's life from birth to ascension).¹⁵ Innocent's text thus provides the classic, twofold understanding of ecclesiastical clothing in the Middle Ages: that it follows divine law as commanded in the Old Testament and also symbolizes Christ's literal



Figure 3.1 An early-fourteenth-century manuscript of Durand's *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* depicts in the bas-de-page an ape wearing a red cowl (detail), in an imitation of the bishop's order of vestments depicted above on the same page (see plate 2). © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. London, British Library, Add. 31032, fol. 33v.

entrance into the material (and sinful) world. According to the symbolic system of the thirteenth-century Church, therefore, vestments represented both divine order and mortal disorder.

Durand relies heavily on Innocent's earlier work but also expands his own interpretations in ways that are especially helpful for understanding perceptions of religious attire in the latter half of the thirteenth century. Like many medieval theologians, he develops the link between allegorical interpretation and ornamentation. For example, he opens the *Rationale* by explaining, as Innocent does in *De Missarum Mysteriis*, that religious ornaments contain within them an invisible sacred order revealed only through a combination of industrious exposition and divine gift, and by describing the value of the study of symbolism for both learned and unlearned priests.¹⁶ He opens Book III of the *Rationale*, the book devoted to ecclesiastical vestments, by rearticulating the key cultural distinction between religious and secular dress: we do not wear the sacred vestments for everyday use, he says, so that we can emphasize the immaterial aspects of their material transformation: "to note," he says, "that just as we change garments according to the letter, so too should we do this according to the spirit" [ad notandum quod sicut mutationem habitus secundum litteram facimus, ita et secundum spiritum agamus].¹⁷

The synthesis of matter and spirit is an important subject throughout the *Rationale*, and vestments are given primary place in the discussion of that synthesis. This guiding principle is made most evident in the very title and central conceit of Durand's entire opus, which expands Innocent's brief mention of the episcopal pectoral ornament called the *rationale*, taken from the primary element of the high priest's attire in Exodus 28. Durand explains the rich symbolism of the title in the Proem to the treatise:

Sane liber iste Rationalis uocabulo describitur. Nam quemadmodum in rationali iudicii quod legalis pontifex ferebat in pectore scriptum erat *manifestatio et ueritas* sic et hic rationes uarietatum in diuinis officiis et earum ueritas describuntur et manifestantur quas in scrinio pectoris sui ecclesiarum prelati et sacerdotes debent fideliter conseruare. Et sicut in illo erat lapis in cuius splendore filii Israel Deum sibi fore propitium agnoscebant, sic et deuotus lector ex huius lectionis splendore in diuinorum officiorum misteriiis eruditus agnoscit Deum fore nobis propitium, nisi forte eius indignationem culpe offendiculo improuide incurramus.

[The word *Rationale* is appropriately used as the title of this book, because just as "revelation and truth" were written on the pectoral of judgment that the High Priest bore on his vestments, so too the *Rationale* contains the reasons for the variations of the Divine Offices, and their inner meaning is described and made manifest. The prelates and priests of the Church should faithfully keep these truths in the chamber of their heart. In the pectoral of judgment, moreover, there was a stone by whose splendor the sons of Israel could know that God's favor was with them. In the same way, the devout reader, instructed in the mysteries of the divine offices by the splendor of this book, will be able to know that God's favor will be with us, unless we incur his indignation through the commission of some sin.]¹⁸

In so closely aligning his learned text with a material liturgical ornament, Durand dismisses up front any notion that the ornamental inherently breeds frivolity and excess. The *rationale*, moreover, is not just any ornament: as a contemporary decoration, it was worn in the center of the bishop's chest and represented some of the most lavish and detailed decoration of the liturgical vestments.¹⁹ Durand goes on to describe the four colors of gold in the *rationale* in terms of the principles (*rationes*) that are founded, again, in the "variety of ecclesiastical [things and] offices" [uarietatum in ecclesiasticis rebus atque officiis], variations that are manifested in terms of the fourfold allegorical interpretation: "the historical, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical,

with faith [gold] at the center of all colors” [ystorico, allegorico, tropologico et anagogico, fide media colorantur].²⁰ In this way he makes doubly clear that the two *rationales*—both ornament and text—are meant to clarify and unify any differences or disparities in ecclesiastical appearances or manner.

Durand’s text illuminates the slipperiness of clothing as a symbol, and especially as a symbol of spiritual purity. He teases out again and again the tension between outside and inside, material and immaterial; just as in the above passage the “truth” of the *rationale* manifests itself both externally and internally, so in the Proem to Book III each priest is told to take heed once again that he “not bear a sign without embodying what it signifies; that is, wearing a vestment without its virtue” [ut signum sine significato non ferat; ut uestem sine uirtute non portet].²¹ In explaining more fully the relationship between person and vestments, he quotes an illuminating passage from the liturgical ceremony for the consecration of a bishop (a ceremony that he himself wrote in his popular pontifical):

Pontificalem itaque gloriam non iam honor commendat uestium, sed splendor animarum, quoniam et illa que quondam carnalibus blandiebantur obtutibus, ea potius que in ipsis erant intelligenda poscebant; ut quicquid illa uelamina in fulgore auri, in nitore gemmarum, et in multimodi operis uarietate signabant, hoc iam in moribus actibusque clarescat. Cum et apud ueteres reuerentiam ipsa significationum species optineret, et apud nos certiora sunt experimenta rerum quam enigmata figurarum.

[Now the honor of the vestments does not confer pontifical glory, but rather the splendor of souls, since those things which flatter the carnal gazes more properly summon us to the things that ought to be understood by these vestments, so that whatever these clothes signified with glittering gold, in splendid gems, and with a wide variety of workmanship, can now shine forth in good morals and deeds. Among the ancients, the visual appearance of something acquired as much reverence as what it signified, but for us, the experience of things is more certain than the enigma of figures.]²²

An ecclesiastical figure with noticeably luxurious attire, the bishop is thus held up by Durand (who wrote this text shortly after his own appointment as bishop of Mende) as a potential example for all religious regarding the ideal relationship to one’s ornaments. Even as the bishop is vested with material symbols of his episcopal power in the above passage, he is reminded of the inherent capacity of such garments to seduce the viewer with their surface beauty and of the responsibility he has to outshine glorious appearance with

glorious conduct—to bring a new meaning and implication, *significatio*, to the outward form, *species*, of the vestments. In the last line of this passage we might even glimpse a possible reason for Durand's dogmatic insistence throughout his treatise on the fundamental power of sartorial symbols and allegorical interpretation, that is, the hint at a contemporary shift in interest away from such obscure figures, or *enigmata figurae*. Similar allegorical interpretations of the Mass were disparaged by Albertus Magnus, for example, who died shortly before Durand started writing his *Rationale*.²³

The thirteenth century marked a period of emergence for the figure of the bishop in the medieval Church, and Durand's corresponding emphasis on episcopal ornaments is obvious in his text, the Proem of which expressly outlines the sequential donning of fifteen episcopal vestments from step one, putting on the sandals, "that he will be mindful of the Lord's Incarnation"; to step four, donning the belt, "so that he can curb the impulse towards illicit behavior"; to step eight, donning the gloves, "so that he will avoid vainglory"; to the fifteenth object, treading on carpets, "so that he might show that he despises this world and loves the celestial realm."²⁴ Each of these garments receives another full chapter of exposition in the body of the book, most of which, like the introductory descriptions, address both the temporal aspect of the vestment and its transcendent possibilities, each garment working to remind the wearer of the moral weight and spiritual vulnerabilities associated with his worldly attachments as well as the possibility of surpassing the mortal, material realm through the divine elements those same garments represent. In the bishop's garments, we learn that it is not only the pectoral ornament, or *rationale*, that Durand uses as a unifying symbol for the diverse orders of the Church. As Elliott notes, the bishop's crucial role at the top of the Church hierarchy is also symbolized by the fact that his numerous garments literally encompass those designated to the orders beneath him: in Durand's words, the bishop "wears all the ornaments, to show that he possesses all the orders perfectly."²⁵

There is one problem, however, with the "perfection" of the bishop's multitudinous sartorial representation. That is, as Durand himself points out, the thirteenth-century bishop wears fifteen vestments, whereas God only stipulates eight for Aaron in Exodus 28.²⁶ Durand explains this disparity first by equating sartorial excess with excessive devotion; he quotes Matthew 5:20, stating that "our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven." He then offers another solution, which is to count the bishop's garments in a different way: "On the other hand," he says, "it may also be said that our bishop has eight from head to feet, if we except the ornaments of his feet and hands."

Subtracting the footwear from the bishop's vestimentary numerology makes sense, Durand further states, because it is the pope, rather than the bishop, who is told to "go ye and teach all nations." Apparently not being able to find a justification for excluding the bishop's handwear—that is, the gloves that had become one of the most recognizable aspects of episcopal attire—Durand leaves that part of his new argument out altogether.

This less-than-successful attempt to reconcile such a noticeable disparity in his exegetical explanation of contemporary bishops' vestments helps to illuminate an underdiscussed element of Durand's text and its context. Durand's use of a well-known and somewhat old-fashioned genre, his reliance on earlier, authoritative liturgical writers, his repeated citations of biblical, especially Old Testament sources for his allegory, and, I would argue, the perceived stability of ecclesiastical dress since the Middle Ages, all give the critical impression that the ordered symbolism and use of vestments described in the *Rationale* mirror an ordered use and symbolism in contemporary practice and perception. As Elliott puts it, ecclesiastical vestments seem "frozen in time," trapped in an aesthetic rooted in early Roman ecclesiastical attire.²⁷ A closer look at the subtler tensions in Durand's treatise and its larger circumstances, however, offers a different impression. As I will discuss in the next section, the heavy-handed regulating and ritualizing in the thirteenth century from Lateran IV onward makes it clear that at least in this period, mutability in religious dress as well as inappropriate clerical use of both religious and secular attire were seen as problems that needed to be rationalized and homogenized—that is, they existed to the extent that they needed to be controlled. Durand's elaborate interpretations of the vestments seem to tap into this impulse, often working so hard to tie each piece of attire to an authoritative biblical passage—preferably from Exodus 28—that the meanings of individual garments often contain obvious gaps or duplications.

Directly after explaining away the issue of the fifteen ecclesiastical garments, for example, Durand addresses yet another discrepancy: in fact the vestments include *more* than the already problematic fifteen garments listed. Durand proceeds to discuss the existence of two important contemporary garments not included in Innocent's earlier text and that he cannot seem to easily categorize. The first of these garments is put on *before* all other sacred vestments: the linen surplice (*superpellicium*). The surplice was a modified version of the white linen alb, and its ritual use was promoted in the thirteenth century from being worn solely as a choir vestment to being worn for the administration of the sacrament and other priestly services; it had not yet in this period become the distinctive garment of the lower orders.²⁸ Durand seems to have no problem creating a consistent interpretation of this vest-

ment: the garment, he says, is to be worn over common dress because it is a figure for the mortification of the flesh: literally worn over, *super*, the tunics of skin, *pellicias tunicas*, in which Adam was clad after the Fall.²⁹ Its whiteness represents the cleanness and purity of chastity; its role as the first sacred garment represents the primary virtue of innocence; its ampleness represents ample charity; and its crosslike shape represents Christ's passion, as those who wear it should experience crucifixion for their vices and concupiscence [*quodque illud gerentes crucifigi debent uitii et concupiscentiis*]. In his final point about this garment, he ties it to Exodus 28, stating that, like Moses, who used the clothing offered by the people of the Tabernacle to make Aaron's first garments, so the surplice is sometimes made of the white linen cloths put on babies during the baptism ceremony.

Durand has a more difficult time explaining the second "extra" garment, which is put on *after* all the other sacred attire. The cope or long cloak (*pluviale* or *capa*) also came into its liturgical importance in the thirteenth century. Early-thirteenth-century ecumenical and provincial regulations deemed the *cappa clausa* or closed cope a universal and properly modest garment for the clergy (as opposed to the open cloak, or *capa scissa*); as one bishop states, the cope is a piece of attire "which adapts itself . . . to every order."³⁰ Yet as the century wore on, the cope also became a privileged garment of paramount value and importance, usually made of silk, and highly ornamented—often more so than the chasuble—for its use in processions. By the second half of the century it had become, according to historian Janet Mayo, "the principal vestment of the Church," worn by priests and upper clergy for all ceremonial occasions not connected with the Mass itself; its shape had also become more fitted and its hood had become a decorative appendage.³¹ The cope's aesthetic purpose was so ritualized that its color began to change for the feast occasion. In Lincoln in 1260, the ceremonies for martyrs required red copes, for confessors green or brown, and for matrons or betrothed a saffron color.³² The back of the cope—the part most often on view to the congregation—became the most highly ornamented area, eventually changing its shape to facilitate the Eucharistic canon when the host had to be raised into the air. Episcopal and papal copes were of course the most highly decorated, often with Opus Anglicanum, the world-renowned English embroidery that reached its peak in the thirteenth century (see plate 3).³³ Such rich copes became important symbolic gifts within the Church, a type of ecclesiastical currency. Besides the copes and other vestments required by the thirteenth-century constitutions to be provided to Churches by their parishioners, exchequer records document Henry III's various purchases of expensive copes for chapels and bishops; in addition, "profession" copes were required to be given to the

Church of Canterbury by each subordinate bishop in the diocese as a symbol of the bishop's canonical compliance.³⁴

As my discussion of "Song Upon the Tailors" will further demonstrate, by the end of the thirteenth century when Durand was writing, the cope was clearly an object of beauty, luxury, ritual—and derision. Matthew Paris, for example, describes Innocent IV in 1246 as greedily demanding *Opus Anglicanum* from the English to wear on the orphreys (or decorative bands) of his processional copes as well as his chasubles. Paris, admittedly a biased observer, depicts the pope as attempting to get the embroidery *pro nihilo*, for nothing, a display of open avarice which he claims offended even the scruples of the London merchants.³⁵ Most likely because they were not strictly liturgical garments, copes were also one of the few priestly vestments that were decorated with personal identification markers, often embroidered with initials, names, and heraldic devices of the wearer or donor rather than with divine or biblical figures or conventional designs.³⁶ Such expensive and vain personal touches risked undermining the tenets of Christian stoicism as well as (at least in terms of the wearer's devices) the constitutional idea that priestly vestments were owned by the parishioners and not by the Church or priests. Such extravagant decoration might well have helped fuel the cope's associations with clerical avarice and abuse.

It is in this context that we must understand both Durand's inclusion of the cope and its allegorical interpretation. As if to counter such accusations, for example, Durand immediately connects the cope with the "tunic of the law" from Exodus 28, even before giving the physical details of the garment and their basic allegorical interpretations:

Est etiam et alia uestis que pluuiiale uel capa uocatur, que creditur a legali tunica mutuata; unde sicut illa tintinabulis, sic ista fimbriis insignitur, que sunt labores et huius mundi sollicitudines. Habet etiam capucium, quod est supernum gaudium. Prolixa est, usque ad pedes, per quod perseuerantia usque in finem significatur. In anteriori parte aperta est, ad notandum quod sancte conuersantibus uita patet eterna, seu quod eorum uita patere debet aliis in exemplum.

[There is also another vestment that is called the pluvial or cope, which is believed to have been borrowed from the tunic of the Old Law; and so where there were bells, now it is marked with fringes, which are the labors and worries of this world. It also has a hood, which is supernatural joy. It is long, going down to the feet, which signifies perseverance right to the end. In the front it is open, to note that eternal life is open to those who

live in holiness, or whose life ought to be made well known as an example to others.]³⁷

To this description of the cope Durand then adds an anagogic interpretation, linking it to the resurrection of the dead:

Rursus, per capam gloriosa corporum immortalitas intelligitur; unde illam nonnisi in maioribus festiuitatibus induimus, aspicientes in futuram resurrectionem, quando electi, deposita carne, binas stolas accipient, uidelicet requiem animarum et gloriam corporum. Que capa recte interius patula est, et, nisi sola necessaria fibula, inconsuta; quia corpora iam spiritualia facta nullis animam obturabunt angustiis. Fimbriis etiam subornatur; quia tunc nostre nichil deerit perfectioni, sed quod nunc ex parte cognoscimus, tunc cognoscemus sicut et cogniti sumus.

[To continue, the cope is understood to be the glorious immortality of the body; and for this reason, we only wear it on major feast days, looking toward the future resurrection when the elect, having set aside the flesh, will receive two stoles, namely, the eternal rest of their souls and a glorified body. This cope is appropriately wide-open on the inside and is not sewn together, but only held together out of necessity by a clasp; and this is because when bodies become glorified, they will no longer impede the needs of the soul. The cope is also decorated with fringes, since in the future, there will be nothing lacking for our perfection, but now, we only have a partial understanding, but then, we will understand all things just as we ourselves are understood.]³⁸

Durand depicts the cope as representing material and immaterial, present and future, mortal and immortal: it is both the world inherited through Adam, with its “labors and cares,” and the “glorious immortality” that those who resist such sins will acquire at Judgment. The inherent contradiction in such symbolism is uniquely documented in the manuscript discrepancies involving this passage. While some versions of the *Rationale* state, as above, that the fringe illuminates our own *perfection*, others state just the opposite, that it represents the completeness of our *imperfection* (*imperfectioni*).³⁹

The cope stands out more overtly in Durand's text because it once again leads to his defensive avowal of the appropriateness of vestments not explicitly listed in the Bible. Furthermore, it marks the one place in this book where he explicitly addresses contemporary concerns about the growing richness of ecclesiastical attire. He states, “But certain heretics do vainly talk,

affirming that it can nowhere be found in the New Testament that Christ or his disciples did put on the previous vestments, rashly censuring us that we adorn ourselves with such things” [Quidam autem heretici garriunt nusquam reperiri in nouo testamento quod Christus, uel discipuli eius, premissis uestibus induerentur, reprehendentes nos temere, quia talibus ornatur]. Durand gives a surprising amount of attention to the arguments of these “heretics,” diligently citing their biblical precedents for complaint. Their accusations, he says, rely on the fact that Christ is said to have used none but his own ordinary garments (John 13:12) and that he warned against those who love to walk in long garments (Luke 20:46). Furthermore, the detractors claim, those who wear such attire wish to appear more righteous and better than the people, and are more concerned with the superficialities that the public sees than the underlying truth that God sees (Luke 16:15). Curiously, after delineating the precise arguments against these particular garments, Durand’s own generalized counterarguments seem evasive and inadequate. While he says righteously that the Old Testament will prove them wrong—“their error is most plainly confounded by that which goes before”—the actual examples he uses by no means dispel the allegations. He defends the lack of biblical precedent for these garments, for example, by quoting Ezekiel 42 and 44, in which God stipulates that those who enter his sanctuary to minister shall wear special garments (linen rather than wool) and shall take off those garments when they leave to join the people—passages that discuss material, not style, and make no mention of the “extra” vestments that he has just described in detail and about which he claims his detractors explicitly complain. Durand’s next strategy is to side-step the issue of biblical precedent altogether in favor of Church custom: he lists and interprets the many white linen garments already worn successfully by various orders. He then moves on to list the vestments decreed by the “new” canons put into effect by ecclesiastical councils.⁴⁰ Nowhere does he attempt to defend the issue of biblical or cultural precedent for the much larger question of the luxurious cope.

As we can see in these passages, even while Durand’s interpretations attempt to side-step their own gaps and inadequacies, they do not avoid the provocative questions about changes in ecclesiastical dress overall. His citation of “that which goes before” as the preferred exemplar for understanding contemporary usage of Church vestments correlates with his overall reliance on the Old Testament, and specifically the “clothing of the law” (the *legalia indumenta*), throughout this work, beginning with the *rationale iudicii*, or the Jewish priestly ornament from Exodus 28 that is the namesake of his opus. Yet at the same time, his treatise also takes pains to include the most current ecclesiastical ornament, to the point of discussing garments not found in his

immediate sources and for which there is no room in traditional numerical and hermeneutic structures. In addition, he almost always offers an example of the transcendent possibilities of ornaments to go along with the Old Testament precedence, addressing the twofold nature of the vestment as on the one hand a symbol for divine order and perfection and on the other a symbol for the material, worldly imperfection that must be transcended.

Going back to the Proem of the treatise, we can see that Durand has in fact carved out a specific space for this type of interpretation, laying the groundwork for his extended attempts to reconcile contemporary changes—yes, even fashions—in ecclesiastical ornament and ritual with seemingly implacable Old Testament law. Here Durand suggests explicitly that continuity can be found only through metaphorical or allegorical interpretation. He categorizes types of change to make them seem ordered and stable: of the things commanded by the law, he says, some are meant to be understood morally or literally (for example, “you shall not kill,” and “honor thy father”), while others are meant to be understood mystically or metaphorically (the sacraments, for instance, and “you shall not wear a garment made of wool and cloth”). According to Durand, while the former type of law never changes, the latter type changes in its outward, surface form, but the mystical or metaphorical signification (and hence the law) remains the same.⁴¹ This discussion makes way for Durand’s explanation of the fourfold allegorical interpretation, and it encapsulates the usefulness of allegory as a hermeneutic that absorbs various kinds of change.

Thus, in linking ecclesiastical ornamentation to biblical directives in general and to Christ’s life in particular, Durand once again strives to give the impression of age-old stability. Like the changes in secular attire that I describe in my previous chapter, the appearance, style, and value of religious vestments were rapidly changing in the thirteenth century, a phenomenon that must have been as readily apparent to Durand and his episcopal contemporaries as it was to poets and satirists. Durand’s text not only underscores the necessity of clerical meditation on the use and understanding of vestments in general and of each garment in particular, but also reminds us that such meditation often dealt with the fundamental conflict surrounding ecclesiastical ornament: the problematic materiality and commerciality of the objects used to represent the sublime. Durand’s process of finding biblical meaning if not precedent in each garment and ornament worn in Mass or other clerical ceremonies in effect works to distinguish the changes in Church attire from similar changes in the secular world. If the aesthetic and use of vestments are guided by Old Testament law and by Christ’s experience dressed in mortal skin, then they cannot also be guided by the fluctuations of

fashion that govern secular clothing and goods. In fact one of the burdens of Book III of the *Rationale* as a whole might be said to be its attempt to give Church vestments unquestionable biblical and cultural authority and thus to keep their changes from being recognized as such.

LEX METAMORPHOSEOS AND “SONG UPON THE TAILORS”

Bishop Durand’s largely futile efforts to recast vestimentary change as a form of stasis in his *Rationale* might be said to have a foil in a satirical poem apparently written over twenty years earlier, called “Song Upon the Tailors,” which casts both episcopal attire and allegorical readings such as those in the *Rationale* as irresponsibly and irretrievably changeable. The “law of metamorphosis” that governs clerical conduct in this poem helps to establish its satirical features as a goliardic poem, a popular genre of ecclesiastical parody in thirteenth-century England that imagined an upside-down religious order made up of vagabonds who vow to live according to personal pleasures and who follow one gluttonous Bishop Goliard.⁴²

“Song Upon the Tailors” is written in Latin and Anglo-Norman and found in British Library, MS Harley 978, an important thirteenth-century English miscellany that gives us what is thought to be the earliest English lyric, “Sumer is icumin in,” as well as the only complete collection of both the *Fables* and the *Lais* of Marie de France.⁴³ This manuscript provides an important context for the anonymous poem by suggesting a probable date for its copying, 1261–65, as well as by providing a group of companion poems from which one can gather a more complete picture of the poem’s ideological grounds. While Harley 978 begins with a selection of mainly Latin hymns and prayers, for example, the portion of the manuscript that contains “Song Upon the Tailors” contains in its forty-two folios a much more partial, subjective picture of contemporary culture and events: goliardic poems on ecclesiastical corruption, short poems on clerkly and lay avarice, songs on the times, two poems on the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, the French satire *La Besturné* about corruption regarding the bishopric of Winchester in 1262, and the *Song of Lewes*, which celebrates Simon de Montfort’s moral and military victory over Henry III in 1264. Harley 978 has long been linked to the Benedictine Abbey of Reading, an important monastery founded by Henry I, who was buried there, and consecrated by Thomas Becket. Recently Andrew Taylor has convincingly argued that the owner of Harley 978 was a particular monk at Reading named William of Winchester, and that this section of the miscellany was most likely copied by a monk at Reading.⁴⁴

As the poems accompanying "Song Upon the Tailors" reveal, the short period from 1261–65 to which the copying of the manuscript has been dated was especially volatile in English political leadership. Baronial reform and rebellion against Henry III dominated the political landscape, the highlights of which were the creation of the Provisions of Oxford, a baronial constitution forcing Henry to recognize the Parliament, in 1258–59; Simon de Montfort's capture and imprisonment of Henry at the Battles of Lewes when the king refused to honor the terms of the Provisions, in 1264; and de Montfort's eventual defeat and death at the Battle of Evesham, in 1265.⁴⁵ This was also a period when long-held clerical grievances came to a head, culminating in 1261 when Archbishop Boniface of Canterbury legislated, with ecclesiastical sanctions, a series of provincial constitutions formally claiming clerical rights and liberties and requiring the king to remedy their complaints about his privileging of royal law over divine law.⁴⁶ The monastery at Reading seems to have had a certain number of ties to the secular and ecclesiastical reforms of the time, as Simon de Montfort passed through Reading in June 1263 on his campaign to restore the Oxford Provisions, and in October 1264 the Abbey hosted an ecclesiastical council that generated the support of the barons who were now in control of the government.⁴⁷ While "Song Upon the Tailors" appears more concerned with ecclesiastical corruption than royal corruption, however, its interests are far from explicit. As I will discuss, at times its theme of misrule in general and its focus on distortions of divine law in particular also seem to speak to the political and ideological struggles against Henry, who was not only known by contemporaries as a "Proteus" but who actually courted an association with Fortune's wheel, having it painted on his palace chambers at Clarendon.⁴⁸ The poet's fascination with changeability means that his objects of satire also sometimes shift depending on the stanza one reads.

The poem makes its theme of changeability clear in an epigraph quoting the famous opening lines of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / Corpora; Dii, coeptis nam vos mutastis et illas / Aspirate meis" [Of bodies changed to other forms I tell; You gods, who have yourselves wrought every change, Inspire my enterprise].⁴⁹ Its subsequent ninety lines present a dizzying array of social, sexual, economic, religious, and political metamorphoses through the overarching metaphor of a garment tailored according to one owner's ever-changing needs and desires. The narrative arc follows the progress of a single piece of cloth through its brief but volatile lifespan: what begins as a *capa* (cape or cope) develops quickly (through sewing, collaring, decollaring, squaring, rounding, defurring, and refurring) into other vestimentary forms, such as a mantle (with and with-

out fur lining), a *capuce* or hood, a clerkly *aumuce* or *almuce* (hooded cape), and gloves. While the poet offers few specifics regarding the status of the garments or the tailoring practices themselves—he shows little professional knowledge about garment-making—he lavishly dramatizes the transformations the cloth undergoes. It is said to “change bodies” like Proteus and experiences “the fortune of Tiresias” by changing its sex; the defurred garment becomes a circumcised Jew, who is later “cleansed by baptism” when the garment is dyed; the sewn and re sewn garment is likened to a divorced, remarried, and widowed bride; and finally, the “hypocritical mantle” changes owners as well as social status when it is given to a servant for his wages. The poet infuses his verses with a staggering nomenclature of transformation; words such as *mutare*, *transmutare*, *formare*, *declinare*, and *metamorphoses* saturate the short poem. Within this discourse of change, the dominant categories entail some form of division and/or separation (suggested by words such as *rumpere*, *separare*, *divortium*, *dividere*, *caedere*, and *violare*) or their opposite, mixing and/or merging (such as *copulare*, *matrimonium*, *reparare*, *consortium*, *conjugare*, and the Anglo-Norman *espuser*). In addition, shifts in voice, perspective, and language—especially the seemingly random shifts from Latin to Anglo-Norman throughout—structurally reproduce the poem’s central focus on change. Sustaining the poem’s chaotic subject matter is its recurring, hymnlike verse structure: a six-line stanza of two sets of two octosyllabic lines followed by a heptasyllabic one (887887), with the rhyme pattern *aabccb*.

As its modern title suggests, the poem initially presents its hymn to sartorial changeability as a parody of the figure of the tailor. Because of the growing importance of tailored fashions in this period, the tailor achieved visibility as a figure of emerging power and prominence in thirteenth-century Europe.⁵⁰ In England, where this poem’s manuscript was copied and owned, the word *taillour* (from the Old French *tailleur*, cutter) emerged in this period in the specific sense of a fashioner of clothes, and the London tailors’ guild was established at the century’s end.⁵¹ As its Ovidian invocation to the “Gods who have wrought every change” suggests, however, the poem’s primary interest is the literary *trope* of the tailor and his craft, rather than the practical aspects of tailoring as a profession. Along with the theme of sartorial shape-shifting and metamorphosis, therefore, the poem offers as a guiding theme the proud tailor who thinks he is a god. In this way the poem engages the trope of the *Deus artifex*, in which the notion of God as a tailor figured prominently due to his creation of Adam’s and Eve’s first garments in Genesis 3:21 and to his extended instructions to Moses about the construction of Aaron’s garments in Exodus 28, upon which Durand so explicitly relied.⁵²

The first lines of "Song Upon the Tailors" address these tailor-gods directly, in the form of a mock-service in honor of their feast day:

Ego dixi, dii estis;
 Quae dicenda sunt in festis
 Quare praetermitterem?
 Dii, revera, qui potestis
 In figuram novae vestis
 Transmutare veterem.
 (1–6)

[I have said, you are gods; why should I omit the service that should be said on festival days? Gods certainly you are, who can transform an old garment into the shape of a new one.]

On their surface these lines introduce one of the most foundational complaints in medieval discourses about secular fashion, which is the change from old-fashioned, traditional attire to new shapes and styles, a phenomenon that makes up Sarah-Grace Heller's criterion number one of the thirteenth-century fashion system.⁵³

Several aspects of this stanza, however, suggest an additional meaning. To describe the newly tailored form as a *figura*, for example, seems implicitly to invoke the allegorical process of figural interpretation by which New Testament meaning can come from the Old Testament text, the sense of *figura* described by Erich Auerbach and used, somewhat after its heyday, in Durand's *Rationale*.⁵⁴ The mention of the "old" garment that is transformed into the "new" thus appears to include an inside clerical joke not only about the allegorical process itself, but also possibly about its current unfashionability and declining favor among theologians. Likewise, the word for change used here, *transmutare*, also had specialized usages in ecclesiastical contexts, being a term employed at various times to depict the change that happens at the consecration of the Mass and also a term for the translation of a bishop.⁵⁵ Last, the opening phrase *Ego dixi, dii estis* repeats a verse from the Vulgate's Psalm 81, a passage in which God judges the appointed gods of the world, condemning their neglect of the poor and needy and their acceptance of wickedness, darkness, and disorder.⁵⁶ In the New Testament Christ repeats the same phrase in order to defend himself from accusations of blasphemy for calling himself the son of God: he asks his accusers, "nonne scriptum est in lege vestra quia ego dixi dii estis" ["Is it not written in your law, I said you are gods?" (John 10:34)]. Together these passages reveal a clear

ecclesiastical subtext of this poem, exposing the work as a type of double *contrafactum*: a poem that uses the lyric form of a hymn to describe secular sartorial disorder, but then adds another layer of parodic inversion in which the true target is not tailors in themselves, but Church leaders who *act* like tailors. Such figures, the passage dramatically suggests, have come to their moment of judgment.⁵⁷

The demand for judgment over clerical conduct in this poem and in other poems in Harley 978 reflects the growing scrutiny of clerkly behavior in this period of the thirteenth century, an outcome of the increased articulation of the rights and responsibilities of the clergy following the canons of the Fourth Lateran Council. While the Lateran IV canons detailed precise requirements of clerical restraint from various temporal pleasures, including incontinence, drunkenness, laziness, and gambling, the most visible reforms were sartorial, an apparent consequence of Innocent III's particular interest in clothing symbolism and regulation throughout his papacy.⁵⁸ Cordelia Warr has argued that Innocent's regulation of dress marked a shift away from earlier decrees stressing basic sartorial humility and toward an emphasis on ecclesiastical expression through specific visual symbols.⁵⁹ Canon 16 of Lateran IV seems to signal this change, outlining a uniform style for all orders—a full-length garment not too short or too long, which is closed in front—as well as outlawing certain fashions deemed too 'secular': long sleeves, embroidered or pointed shoes, red or green colors, gold or silver buckles, rings, and ornamental accoutrement for horses. Part of a larger attempt to systematize ecclesiastical practices in the thirteenth century, these sumptuary regulations reveal the extent to which change and difference were suppressed in the furtherance of the appearance of a unified, unchanging Church. Even as the doctrine of transubstantiation made transmutation of matter itself the center of Church ceremony in this period, the bodies that performed that ceremony were expected to appear more regularized and fixed, less capable of material change.⁶⁰

Importantly, the canons also outlined a structure for the institutional observation and correction of that conduct. According to the sixth canon, each archbishop, upon pain of suspension from office and benefits, was to hold an annual provincial council with the purpose of rectifying abuses, reforming clerical morals, and revisiting the canonical rules, after which they were to publish the findings and appoint personnel to "investigate what needs correction or reform."⁶¹ While it appears that few English bishops in the thirteenth century actually held the prescribed councils regularly, the years leading up to the creation of Harley 978 saw their rapid increase. The councils of 1257, 1258, and 1261 reformulated earlier decrees on clerical conduct, and

several bishops in this period followed the earlier example of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln and steadfast reformer, who, despite royal interference, had conducted a personal visitation of his diocese in the 1240s to inquire into the intimate details of cleric and lay lives.⁶² When the poet of "Song Upon the Tailors" presents Church leaders as tailors who shape and reshape their subjects on a whim, he could perhaps be reacting to the new zeal with which some English bishops embraced these regulations on clerical attire. And when he asks for judgment on these tailor-gods by echoing Psalm 81, he signals a turning of the tables in which the unjust judges on earth find that they themselves must also be judged.

The remainder of "Song Upon the Tailors" seems to reflect this power inversion. In a stanza rich with allusion, the specific mention of gloves and their liturgical function indicates that the poem will address bishops' attire in particular:

Si quid restat de morsellis
 Caesi panni sive pellis,
 Non vacat officio:
 Ex hiis fiunt manuthecae,
 Manutheca quidem Graecè
 Manuum positio.
 (31–36)

[If there remain any morsels of the cloth or skin which is cut, it does not want a use: of these are made gloves; a glove is called in Greek "the placing of the hands."]

Bishops' gloves were highly powerful garments in the symbolic system of the medieval Church. Along with the ring, staff, and mitre, or two-pointed hat, they designated the bishop's symbolic domain and were explicitly associated with the ritual "laying on of hands"—*cheirontonein*, or *cheirotomia*—alluded to here in the last line. A rite stemming from various biblical passages (for example, Acts 6:6, 1 Timothy 4:4, and 2 Timothy 1:6), the laying on or 'imposition' of hands represents the special power of a bishop to impart the grace of the Holy Spirit *ex opera operato* in various ecclesiastical ceremonies. The gloved placing of the hands implicitly marked the transformative moment of these ceremonies. In the ordination of other bishops or priests, for example, the bishop's placing of the hands symbolized the conferral of the spiritual power of the priesthood and was immediately followed by the investiture of the garments that symbolized that power. The primary con-

notation of the gloves and the laying on of hands, however, was the bishop's capacity to preside over the Eucharistic liturgy, and thus to consecrate and officiate the ultimate act of transmutation, transubstantiation. The period to which Harley 978 has been dated coincides with the Church's codification of Eucharistic importance in ecclesiastical ritual; the feast of Corpus Christi was first implemented in Urban IV's papal bull of 1264, exactly the period in which the manuscript seems to have been copied.⁶³ In describing the scraps of leftover material that mark the mundane beginnings of a bishop's ceremonial gloves, the sacrilegious poet of "Song Upon the Tailors" undermines the symbolic transformative power of the garments themselves.⁶⁴

Durand's discussion of the symbolism of the episcopal gloves explains the allegory behind the ritual: a bishop's gloves are made from goat skin, like those garments worn by Jacob, because the skin represents the "image of sin" with which his mother Rebecca (who represents the grace of the Holy Spirit) dressed the "true Jacob" (that is, the works of Christ).⁶⁵ The skins, and the gloves made from them, thus represent the material challenges of the sinful human body itself, which Christ puts on to avoid detection, and whose bodily appetites and toils he experiences firsthand. As Durand continues:

Christus enim similitudinem peccati sine peccato suscepit, ut incarnationis misterium dyabolo celaretur. Nam ad similitudinem peccatorum esuriit et sitiuit, doluit et expauit, dormiuit et laborauit.

[Christ took on the appearance of sin, though He was without sin, so that the mystery of the Incarnation would be hidden from the devil. For being in the image of sinners, He hungered and thirsted, mourned, became fearful, slept and toiled.]⁶⁶

In Durand's explanation the episcopal gloves become a larger metaphor for the beleaguered ecclesiastical relationship to clothing in this period. Those bishops appearing in lavish garments, he suggests, are to be perceived as Christ in human weeds or as Jacob in Esau's garments and skins; though they take on the *likeness*—the similitude—of sin, they do not indulge in the sin itself.

"Song Upon the Tailors" takes pains to show the failure of this ideal. At a time when clerical bodies were being regulated in a way that tried to restrict change and diversity, this poem insists not merely on the somatic changeability of those bodies but on their diverse and vacillating apparel. In the second stanza the poem settles on the bishop's *capa* or cope as the best metaphor for this changeability, a garment whose potential vacillations of

style, form, and function the poet describes for fourteen stanzas. Stanza 2 begins:

Pannus recens et novellus
 Fit vel capa vel mantellus,
 Sed secundum tempora
 Primum capa, post pusillum
 Transmutatur haec in illum;
 Sic mutatis corpora.
 (7–12)

[The cloth, while fresh and new, is made either cape/cope or mantle; but in order of time, first it is a cape/cope, after a little space it is transformed into the other; thus you change bodies.]

As the punning reference to changing bodies at the end of this passage suggests, the poet's fascination with corporeal metamorphosis means he often conflates the artisan and consumer, the shaper and the shape-shifter. Yet as this passage also shows, the clothes hold as much interest to this poem as the tailors. To the stylistic transformations that the *capa* underwent in the thirteenth century, the poet adds the practical and inevitable process of recycling clothing. Because of their large size and valuable material and decoration—essentially an entire semicircle of precious silk and embroidery—copes likely *were* made into and out of other garments over time. One of the earliest extant copes—the famous Syon cope from the early 1300s (see plate 3)—shows signs of this kind of alteration and may have been a chasuble at one point.⁶⁷

What the poet focuses on, however, is less the *fact* of recycling ecclesiastical clothing than the magnitude, speed, and motivation behind the garments' transformations. In the passage I have also used as an epigraph to this chapter, what could be regarded as a prudent and charitable undertaking is instead portrayed as a protean ethos of change:

Antiquata decollatur,
 Decollata mantellatur,
 Sic in modum Proteos
 Demutantur vestimenta;
 Nec recenter est inventa
 Lex metamorphoseos.
 (13–18)

[When it becomes old, the collar is cut off; when deprived of the collar, it is made a mantle, thus in the manner of Proteus, are garments changed; nor is the law of metamorphosis a new discovery.]

Here the owner's underlying attention to the condition of aging garments as they are recycled and handed down is offset by the poet's presentation of the changes these garments undergo, their "law of metamorphosis," which, as the poem progresses, conveys such frequent and rapid movement that the effect is often not of old, overused attire but of newly and continuously revised garments, always novel or different because of what one can add (a hood, gloves, fur on the outside) or subtract (a collar, fur lining). The following stanza represents this effect well, suggesting as it does four successive sartorial changes in one short season. The seemingly arbitrary shift into Anglo-Norman in line 26 heightens the effect of indiscriminate variability:

Bruma tandem revertente
Tost unt sur la chape enté
 Plerique capucium;
 Alioquin dequadratur
 De quadrato retundatur,
 Transit in almucium.
 (25–30)

[When, at length, winter returns, many engraft immediately upon the cape a capuce; then it is squared; after being squared it is rounded; and so it becomes an aumuce.]

In such passages even the necessary winterizing of old clothing takes on a decidedly trendy and fashion-forward slant; in this case the *aumuce*—a fur-hooded cape especially popular in the cold cathedrals of England—is positioned as the *au courant* favorite. The *aumuce*, along with other pieces of religious attire, did have the potential for this kind of signification, since which kind of fur lined the hood, squirrel or ermine, carried obvious cultural and hierarchical resonance; some bishops of royal blood, for example, were allowed *aumuces* of spotted ermine with hanging tails.⁶⁸ The shift to Anglo-Norman here and throughout the poem may also suggest particular practices of the Church leaders; a poem that was copied a few pages after "Song Upon the Tailors" in Harley 978 speaks about a Church dean whose delight in exploring "subaltern things" [res subalternas (95)] includes "changing the

tune of his tongue and yesterday's garments" [Mutans linguae modulum et vestes hesternas (96)] as he heads on his way to taverns.⁶⁹

The description of a square garment being "rounded" also has analogues in other poems of Harley 978, which present the metaphor of changing square things for round as a specific type of metamorphosis generated by ecclesiastical corruption—that is, the process of changing honest things for coins. In this way ecclesiastical avarice takes on a Fortune-like cycle of transience, as in the following passage from the same poem a few pages after "Song Upon the Tailors":

Roma, turpitudinis jacens in profundis,
Virtutes praeposterat opibus immunis,
Vacillantis animi fluctuans sub undis,
Diruit, aedificat, mutat quadrata rotundis.
(50–53)

[Rome, lying in the depths of turpitude, ranks virtues beneath filthy lucre; fluctuating under the waves of a vacillating mind, she overthrows, builds, and changes square things for round.]⁷⁰

In this poem greed causes things physically to change shape by subjecting them to this "round form" [formae . . . rotundae (72)]. The canons, the biblical patriarchs, and even the (square) Book itself succumb to this corruptive process of rounding, as we see in the following playful lines:

Coram cardinalibus, coram patriarcha,
Libra libros, reos res, Marcum vincit marca,
Tantumque dat gratiae lex non parco parca,
Quantum quisque sua nummorum servat in arca.
(61–65)

[Before the cardinals and before the patriarch, a pound overcomes the Bible, money the accused, and a marc Mark, the law sparing to him who is not sparing, gives only as much grace as each has money in his purse.]⁷¹

By connecting episcopal clothing to this more widespread metaphor of shape-shifting corruption, the poet of "Song Upon the Tailors" taps suggestively into another, larger *lex metamorphoseos*: the ability of avarice to literally and figuratively re-form—to 'tailor'—the world to suit its desires. Corruption

thus carries an aesthetic effect not just through the appearance of the luxury garment but also in the changed and changing form of that object, a rounding effect embodied by the semicircular *capa* and arguably underscored by the circular *aabccb* rhyme pattern of the poem itself.

Another particular complaint that the poet voices in “Song Upon the Tailors” is the bishop’s concealment of the age of his garment coupled with his reluctance to donate it to others. This kind of complaint had precedent among goliardic poems. Hugo of Orleans, also known as Primas, a poet popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the attributed author of at least one other goliardic poem in Harley 978, speaks contemptuously in his poem “Pontificum Spuma” (“Pontifical scum”) about an old unlined cloak, a *mantellum sine pluma*, given to him by a proud bishop who selfishly tore out the fur lining first. Commenting on clerkly avarice as well as, perhaps, on a lack of papal or episcopal protection more generally, the poet compares this flimsy garment to a shroud, and in the final stanza he has the mantle itself speak to confirm its uselessness against the chill and against the speaker’s wheezing cold.⁷² “Song Upon the Tailors” carries some resemblances to this poem in its extensive complaints about similar sartorial tampering and in its nearly eight stanzas on the removal and replacement of this garment’s lining and fur. After several references to its donation (for example, lines 22 and 88), the last stanza of “Song Upon the Tailors” describes the owner finally giving away his “hypocritical mantle” (90) with a new-looking fur on the outside only after it has become completely devoid of warmth on the inside. This passage also shifts into Anglo-Norman at key moments, this time seeming perhaps to mark the direct speech of the garment’s owner:

Pars pilosa foris paret
 Sed introrsus pilis caret
 Vetustas abscondita;
 Datur tamen, *k’il n’i eit perte*,
 Servienti, *pur deserte*,
 Mantellus hypocrita.
 (85–90)

[The hairy part is turned out, but the old part, concealed inwardly, is bare of hairs. Now the hypocritical mantle, in order that there may be nothing lost, is given to the servant for his wages.]

The garment, like its episcopal owner, is hypocritical because it began as one thing and ended as another; in this case, it began as a luxurious processional

cope and ended as a gutted and debased mantle. More than that, however, the false giving in this final passage contradicts one of the most basic tenets of Christian charity, that of giving your goods or clothing to a needier person.

The symbolic act of giving one's cloak to another was epitomized of course by Saint Martin of Tours, one of the most popular saints of the Middle Ages—and incidentally, the patron saint of tailors—about whose cloak two different charitable stories circulated in this period.⁷³ The first story takes place when Martin is a soldier in the Roman army and cuts his cloak in half to give to a shivering pauper; he later sees a vision of Christ wearing the half of the cloak he had given to the beggar, who thanks him personally for his charity (after which Martin converts). The later story or “Second Charity” of Saint Martin is even more appropriate in the context of this study. Durand tells a version of the story in Book VII of the *Rationale*: when Martin is bishop of Tours he meets another pauper begging for a warm coat. Martin sends his steward to buy one for him, but when the steward comes back with a cheap cloak (so cheap it should be called a mantle) Martin gives his episcopal vestments to the pauper instead, and takes the skimpy cloak for himself. When Martin celebrates Mass dressed in this decrepit attire that does not properly cover his arms or legs, angels appear and cover his bare arms with bracelets of gold and a ball of fire appears over his head.⁷⁴ With such a prevalent cultural understanding of the *capa* as a symbol of charity, the hypocritical garment of “Song Upon the Tailors,” donated only when it has lost its value and functionality, cannot help representing the opposite of proper episcopal behavior in general and of Saint Martin in particular.

While the hypocrisy of the garment in this poem resides most overtly in its sartorial trendiness and in the prelate's stinginess and lack of true *caritas*, there are also suggestions of other, more serious instances of pretense and impropriety. In the particularly imaginative stanza that directly follows the reference to the *lex metamorphoseos*, for example, the poet presents the sewing up of a torn cloth as a type of sex change that each garment must undergo before the ecclesiastical primates—that is, the archbishops and bishops—will deign to give them to their subordinates:

Cum figura sexum mutant;
 Prius ruptam clam recludant
 Primates ecclesiae;
 Nec donatur, res est certa,
 Nisi prius sit experta
 Fortunam Tiresiae.

(19–24)

[With their shape they change their sex; the primates of the Church privately close up again what was before torn; nor is it given, assuredly, till it has first undergone the fortune of Tiresias.]

While this passage is clearly meant to shock and ridicule, it is hard to locate unequivocally the transgression to which it alludes. At its most innocuous the secret resewing of the torn garment here suggests an excessive attention to one's own appearance and a desire to conceal the flaws or tears of the donated garment; perhaps the owner of the garment is turning it from a showy, open episcopal cope to the more modest *cappa clausa* of the lower orders. At its most provocative the references to a concealed sex change or possible revirginization, the process of literally *reclud*ing the torn garment (or body) to make it whole again, suggest lechery and/or sodomy (possibly involving cross-dressing) that has been covered up by the Church, perhaps in the form of the literal seclusion or closing up of the monastic *recluse*. In either case, the reference to Tiresias, who, like Proteus, is not merely a shape-shifter but also a prophet, makes it apparent that garments and their "fortunes" carry secret knowledge, and that the poet has decided to illuminate for his readers what exactly these particular garments can be made to tell.

THE CIRCUMCISED CLOTH

The implicit comparison between unchanging divine law and the *lex metamorphoseos* practiced by corrupt ecclesiastics that informs the first half of "Song Upon the Tailors" takes a different form in the second half of the poem, where the dominant subject changes from the shape-shifting sartorial bodies of bishops to one particular type of body refashioned by episcopal ritual. The Jewish body is the explicit object of the sartorial manipulations in this section of the poem, which turns from exploring the changes in the shape and terminology of the cope's many manifestations and accoutrements to exploring the garment's second life as a mantle [*mantellus*] with equally numerous changes in thickness and lining. The poet begins by presenting the garment's first separation of cloth and fur as a type of circumcision and orientation into Judaism:

Adhuc primo recens anno,
Nova pelle, novo panno,
In arca reconditur;
Recedente tandem pilo,

Juncturarum rupto filo,
 Pellis circumciditur.
 (43–48)

[In the first year, while it is still fresh, the skin and cloth both being new, is laid up in a box; when, however, the fur begins to be worn off, and the thread of the seams broken, the skin is circumcised.]

The next stanza likens this process of circumcision to a “divorce” [divortium (51)] of skin and cloth, after which the circumcised skin attempts the “crime” [delictum (55)] of a second marriage and new conjugal relations with another cloth against the objections of its former partner. Such relations, the poet says, in a stanza that shifts into Latin midstream, are against canon law:

N'est de concille, ne de sene,
Deus dras espuser à une pene,
E si nus le juggium;
 Permittunt hoc decreta? non:
 Sed reclamat omnis canon
 Non esse conjugium.
 (61–66)

[It is neither of council nor of wisdom to marry two cloths to one fur, and so we judge it. Do the decretals permit this? No: on the contrary, every canon declares that it is no marriage.]

The cloth eventually marries another skin, but only after it has undergone the cleansing ritual of baptism; that is, after it is dyed:

Pannus primum circumcisis
 Viduatus et divisus
 A sua pellicula,
 Jam expertus Judaismum,
 Emundatur per baptismum
 A quacumque macula.

Circumcisis mundatusque
 Est adeptus utriusque
 Legis testimonium;
 Quem baptismus emundavit,

Cum secunda secundavit
 Pelle matrimonium.
 (67–78)

[The cloth having been first circumcised, then widowed and separated from its skin, now having experienced Judaism, is cleansed by baptism from every stain. Being circumcised and cleaned, and having obtained the testimony of both laws, he whom baptism has cleaned contracts a new marriage with a second skin.]

Finally, when this second skin starts to age, it is inverted and a new fur is added, a transformation that the poet describes in terms of those famous Old Testament twins, Jacob and Esau:

Pilis expers, usu fractus,
 Ex Esaü Jacob factus,
Quant li peil en est chaü,
 Inversatur vice versa,
 Rursus idem ex conversa
 Ex Jacob fit Esaü.
 (70–84)

[Being devoid of hair and worn by use, from Esau having become Jacob, when the hair is fallen from it, the process is inverted, and again conversely from Jacob it becomes Esau.]

Like the earlier stanzas of the poem, these passages offer few specifics in terms of actual tailoring processes; rather, their sole purpose seems to be to connect the tailor's transformative art—and thus that of the religious leaders associated with the tailors—to contemporary attitudes toward and regulation of Jews. The poet's dual focus on the rituals of circumcision and baptism—and on the "two laws" they symbolize—are prime examples. In this poem the aging, deteriorating garment becomes the circumcised Jewish body, which can, through dyeing and tailoring, become a new Christianized one. However, like the sentiment in the rest of the poem, this tailoring process is neither wholly ethical nor wholly controllable; it effects other legally and morally questionable mixings between cloths and is ultimately and problematically reversible. In the end, the addition of new fur means Jacob turns back into Esau.

The convoluted, often inscrutably covert, meanings hidden behind a the-

matics and aesthetics of changeability make "Song Upon the Tailors" a difficult poem to unravel and elucidate, and the question of why the poet chooses to draw his focus so minutely on the legislative fashioning of the converted Jewish body is one of the more curious elements of the poem. In a general sense the poem's fascination with the somatic metamorphoses from Jewish to Christian and back again reflects a morbid fascination with somatic transformation itself that also permeates the famously anti-Semitic legends about forced Christian conversions in the thirteenth century, which often conflate fears about the circumcision of young Christian children with fears about the mutilation of the Eucharistic Host.⁷⁵ The historical context makes clear, however, how appropriate the subject of Jewish conversion to Christianity is to the dating of Harley 978, as the decades leading up to the manuscript's production were peak years for Jewish conversions to Christianity in England.⁷⁶ Social eruptions against Jews also dramatically increased; the years of 1263–65 in particular, which coincide with the dating of this poem, saw the sacking of Jewish neighborhoods in London, Canterbury, Northampton, and Winchester (where the probable owner of Harley 978 was from) and the forced baptism, on pain of death, of many of their occupants.⁷⁷ Ecclesiastical discourses describe a persistent threat that Christian converts would revert to their Jewish origins; in the words of the Fourth Lateran Council, some of these converts "do not wholly cast off the old person in order to put on the new more perfectly" [*veterem hominem omnino non exuunt, ut novum perfectius induant*]. Moreover, this threat was explicitly understood in sartorial terms: the same canon likens these uncertain converts to the mixed garment of Deuteronomy 22:11, a garment of wool and linen together that should not be put on: "*indui vestis non debeat lino lanaque contexta*."⁷⁸ There is also evidence that *conversi* in this period wore a garment called by the same name as the contorted *capa* of the poem.⁷⁹

Exploiting the metaphorical possibilities of this trope of the hybrid *conversi* seems to fit into the sacrilegious aesthetic program of "Song Upon the Tailors." Through closely examining the lifecycle of a bishop's attire from its initial existence as a fresh, uncut skin to its unfortunate conclusion as a decrepit, worn-out, "hypocritical mantle," we see revealed a figure whose corruption has transformed him from an example of promising raw material into a prideful, avaricious, uncharitable being whose hypocritical changeability is thrown into relief by the inherently unstable Jewish convert whom he baptizes. Like Durand's text, however, at the heart of this analogy and at the heart of the poem itself is a focus on how changeable appearance and material circumstances interact with divine, Old Testament law. The "law of metamorphosis" demonstrated by the vacillating bishop and the "two laws"

enacted by the convert are implicitly compared with the ideal stability of divine law. As Jeremy Cohen has pointed out, medieval Christian theology conceived the Jews as the embodiment of biblical law, in Bernard of Clairvaux's words, the "living letters" of Scripture: a group whose position in the history of the Old Testament and in the life of Jesus, and especially whose future role as witness to Christian redemption (as its future conversion would mark the second coming of Christ) ostensibly gave it a singular and protected purpose in Christian society.⁸⁰ In England this symbolism was aesthetically legislated as part of the Jewish badge mandated by Lateran IV: whereas the most usual form of this badge on the continent was a wheel or *rouelle*, in England it usually consisted of two white or yellow tablets [*tabulae*], to symbolize the two tablets of the Old Testament law bestowed by God on Moses.⁸¹

By bringing the aesthetically inscribed Jewish body into his poem, therefore, the poet plays in a sophisticated way with the symbolic treatment of divine law itself in clerical culture. The sartorial conversion described here appears to work as an elaborate metaphor, once again, for the allegorical hermeneutic method or *figura* alluded to in the opening stanza of the poem: that is, to convert the Jewish body sartorially marked by the two tablets of the law is to practice typological reading, to literally transmute the Old Testament letter of the law into the New Testament meaning. From its inception this mode of biblical interpretation had been associated with vestimentary metaphor, as a process by which the vesture of the text could be unveiled to reveal its hidden meanings. Durand capitalizes on this association in his *Rationale*, structuring his concept of the text itself as a version of the sartorial ornament worn on the chest of the pope. The poet of "Song Upon the Tailors" keeps the medium of this metaphor but utterly changes the terms, and in the process illustrates his clear disdain for the practice Durand would use to great effect a little over twenty years later. A bishop who practices such a style of biblical reading, suggests this poet, undertakes a systemic abuse of his material; by cutting, separating, defurring, refurring, dyeing, and stripping all protective lining of the text, he ultimately destroys its value before ever offering it to the masses for their own use.

CONCLUSION

The texts that I have examined in this chapter are deeply rooted in the problematic materialism of representation itself, that paradoxical fact, to borrow Daniel Miller's words, "that immateriality can only be expressed through

materiality.”⁸² As both Durand’s *Rationale* and “Song Upon the Tailors” demonstrate, this paradox is especially evident when the material object involved is clothing, an object indispensable to the seemingly contradictory processes of allegorical exposition and material self-fashioning. This chapter illustrates the multiple uses for this trope in clerical culture, showing on the one hand how changeable secular fashions were used as a negative marker against which theologians strove, often unsuccessfully, to construct the appearance of a stable and unified clerical aesthetic distinct from worldly fluctuations, and on the other hand, how the emerging art of tailoring could be used to reexamine the ethics of aesthetic transformation itself in Church culture, whether that transformation involved the style of bishops’ copes or the style of their biblical interpretations. In the next chapter I will discuss Chaucer’s fourteenth-century *Clerk’s Tale* and *Envoy*, texts whose narrator also uses the trope of vestimentary change to capture the paradoxical connection between allegorical exposition and secular fashions, while at the same time speaking to particular material concerns in his culture regarding the consumption, possession, and ownership by English women of their attire.

FOUR

In Swich Richesse

POVRE GRISELDA

AND THE ALL-CONSUMING *ARCHEWYVES*



The late-medieval fascination with naked Griselda and her changes of clothing is, at its heart, according to modern critical discussion, a fascination with translation. Most influential in this respect have been the studies of Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* by Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace, which have deepened our comprehension of Griselda's sartorial symbolism through an understanding of her figure in relation to masculine hermeneutics, her role as a text undressed and dressed, or read and "translated" by educated men, often for sociopolitical purposes.¹ As these and other studies have shown, each new translation of the Griselda tale—from Boccaccio's original through Petrarch, Philippe de Mézières and the anonymous French translations, Christine de Pizan, Chaucer, and forward to the early modern renditions—revised not only the interpretative adornment of the challenging tale, but also the descriptions of Griselda's clothes themselves.² The readings of Griselda's sartorial translations have varied over the years: while earlier studies tended to concentrate on Griselda's allegorical and spiritual translations,³ more recent readings have focused on ritualized investitures, hagiographic translation, and the social performances involved in marriage, divorce, death practices, and (in the early modern period) guild membership.⁴ As I will elaborate in this chapter, Griselda is not merely *translated*; rather, as Chaucer's text states, she is translated "in swich richesse" (*CT* 4.385). This often-overlooked adverbial phrase is a vital and underdiscussed element of Griselda's figuration whose linguistic purpose can serve as momentary metaphor for the critical shift this chapter follows. I would like to extend our attention outward from

the actions performed on Griselda's body—the verbal translating, stripping, and testing—to include the objects modifying these actions: the riches, gems, clothes, and rags that materialize the changing world and changing perceptions around her.

In a basic sense this chapter attempts to take Griselda's clothes at face value, to understand the text's obsession with changing clothes as just that—an obsession with changing clothes.⁵ But *whose* obsession? Griselda's own lack of attachment to the goods that adorn her body, her Boethian stability in the face of extreme misfortune and fortune—literal rags and riches—seems to dismiss the possibility that it holds a lesson about material desires. Yet Griselda's sartorial stoicism rests in implicit comparison with a desiring audience; her own indeterminate or utterly absent reactions to her clothes serve to emphasize the overt reactions of the people around her. This heightened audience reception and perception of Griselda's alternately rich and rude clothes in Chaucer's work reveals the type of classifying of consumption and objectification that Pierre Bourdieu defines as the “distinction” of cultural tastes, or “the social relations objectified in familiar objects, in their luxury or poverty, their ‘distinction’ or ‘vulgarity,’ their ‘beauty’ or ‘ugliness.’”⁶ Further, the consumer categories associated with clothing are manipulated and appropriated in Chaucer's tale; whereas garments are presented as holding the power to transform peasant social status and to sway bourgeois public perception, for example, they are also presented—on the surface, at least—as holding no apparent appeal for the sober and shrewdly insightful aristocratic eye of Walter. As I will discuss, while the Clerk may condemn Walter's tyrannical testing of Griselda, he celebrates to a disturbing extent his prudential ability to see through rude material surfaces to inner beauty and virtue.⁷ In contrast, he identifies and targets those who are seduced by aesthetic beauty and the cultural capital behind it, ultimately aligning superfluity, frivolity, and love of novelty with not only the common “peple” of his tale, but also the *nouveaux riches* merchant class and its spendthrift “arch” wives.

Reading against the grain of Chaucer's poem allows me to explore how this rhetorical offensive against conspicuous consumers grows out of the potential of sartorial consumption as a new form of cultural resistance, an example of what Michel de Certeau calls the “tactics” that consumers use to get around the “strategies” of disciplinary forces.⁸ In a world in which the problem of status-blurring garments and ever-changing, ever-more exorbitant fashions was fast becoming one of the most prominent social concerns, the *Clerk's Tale* situates itself at the very crux of the debate: the sartorial basis of social change and public perception.⁹ By underscoring the disparity between a woman who remains exactly the same whether in rags or riches and the

public's constantly changing perception of her, the tale not only invokes what Lee Patterson calls the "quintessentially bourgeois" appropriation and dislocation of social values (here aristocratic *gentillesse*), but also comments on that process, putting into question the very apparatus of that dislocation (here clothing) in the medieval imaginary.¹⁰ Griselda's lack of material appetite is thus inseparable from the importance that Walter and his subjects (and we the readers) give to array and appearance, and ultimately from the moral judgment that the Clerk renders on this mistaken importance.

It is within this latter textual presence—that is, the nuanced style, terminology, and object(s) of the Clerk's moralizing rhetoric—that I have found the strongest evidence for this materialist reading. While much of the sumptuary detail in the *Clerk's Tale* and *Envoy* is undoubtedly generated by the repressed sociohistorical environment commonly referred to as the "textual unconscious," the *Clerk's Tale's* profound interest in comparing spiritual and material interpretation, and the placement of these concerns in the mouth of the logician Clerk, leads to a significant amount of what appears to be aesthetic (or anti-aesthetic) 'intent' on the Clerk's part.¹¹ As I argue in this chapter, it is specifically through the Clerk's self-conscious insistence on rhetorical and material frugality, coupled with his open address to the sumptuous material world of the Wife of Bath and "al hire secte" (CT 4.1171), that this tale links larger gendered and hegemonic formulations of marriage, authority, and feudal subjectivity to the more immediate problem of the influence of material goods on the medieval worldview. In its attempt to shape audience interpretation according to class and gender, the text grapples intently with the different lenses through which Griselda might be seen, aligning the seemingly divergent but equally illogical forces of tyranny, temptation, and fashion, and it does this through a figure, I will argue, whose own frugality betrays an excessiveness equal to the superficialities that he shuns.

GRISELDA'S *RICHESS*

Stylistically, the *Clerk's Tale*, like the Clerk himself, is stripped of almost all ornament and color, pared down well beyond the simple to the plain.¹² Yet, despite—or as I will suggest, because of—its divestiture of the type of sumptuous detail found in, say, the clothing descriptions of the Wife of Bath or Prioress in the *General Prologue*, or the delectably decorated Alisoun of the *Miller's Tale*, the *Clerk's Tale* is more profoundly invested in the implications of material ornament than perhaps any of the other *Tales*. The first pivotal moment for this reading is the scene of Griselda's translation into *richesse*:

And for that no thyng of hir olde geere
 She sholde brynge into his hous, he bad
 That wommen sholde dispoillen hire right theere;
 Of which thise ladyes were nat right glad
 To handle hir clothes, wherinne she was clad.
 But nathelees, this mayde bright of hewe
 Fro foot to heed they clothed han al newe.

Hir heris han they kembd, that lay untressed
 Ful rudely, and with hir fynGRES smale
 A corone on hire heed they han ydressed,
 And sette hire ful of nowches gret and smale.
 Of hire array what sholde I make a tale?
 Unnethe the peple hir knew for hire fairnesse
 Whan she translated was in swich richesse.
 (CT 4.372–85)

The question directed in the Clerk's own voice toward the listener or reader in line 383 represents Chaucer's most dramatic addition to this scene, parts of which he borrows from both Petrarch's version of the tale and the anonymous French *Le Livre Griseldis*.¹³ While this type of editorial comment is far from unusual for Chaucer or his sources, its strategic placement here introduces and even publicizes the Clerk's complicated interest in the subject of clothing. For one, the contradiction that lies at the heart of the *occupatio* form itself—a device that purports to draw the reader away from a specific subject and toward a larger narrative purpose, even as it effectively highlights that subject with its rhetorical intercession—also lies at the heart of the Clerk's rhetorical question: how can one simultaneously address and refute the subject of "array"?

Ascetic simplicity in both speech and clothing were expected characteristics of young scholars in Chaucer's time, and for this reason the Clerk's pronounced position on vestimentary goods at first appears merely to be consistent with his overall soberness and place in life.¹⁴ On the surface his indifference to all and any ornamentation, what Charles Muscatine calls his spurning of poetry's "ordinary riches" and of readers' corresponding "extravagant taste," also seems in keeping with the "pleyn" tale that the Host requests of him so that he and the other pilgrims "may understonde what ye seye" (CT 4.19, 20).¹⁵ I would argue, however, that through implied comparisons to the secular, worldly, commercial members of his audience, the Clerk's careful sartorial and rhetorical austerity speaks *about* the untutored

masses as much as *for* them.¹⁶ For instance, while on the one hand his portrait in the *General Prologue* appears to present an ideal and ascetic Clerk,¹⁷ this idealness is primarily presented in terms of its contrasting relation to consumption and exchange. To begin, while his garment is “ful thredbare,” it is also a “courtepy” (CT 1.290), or a short, secular tunic that would have been considered part of the “new” fashion of the period.¹⁸ This shabby yet once fashionable garment is but one example among manifold other consumer analogies in the Clerk’s description that together reveal a surprisingly consistent economics of self-mortification: leanness discussed in terms of being “nat right fat” (CT 1.288), philosophy in terms of “litel gold in cofre” (CT 1.298), education in terms of borrowed money “spente” (CT 1.300), desire for purchasing books in terms of shunning “robes riche” (CT 1.295), and poverty in terms of his refusal of secular or “worldly” employment (CT 1.292). Just as this subtext of his *General Prologue* portrait suggests the interface between Chaucer the narrator’s (and other pilgrims’) worldly, commercial perspective and the Clerk’s own performed (and possibly exaggerated) asceticism, so the Clerk’s metatextual dismissal of “array” in Griselda’s first clothing scene speaks to the greater interaction between the moral lesson embedded in his rhetorical performance and the reception of his audience. In the *Prologue* to the *Clerk’s Tale* the Host demands, for the pleasure of the listening audience, not only a plain tale, but also a cheerful, or “myrie tale” (CT 4.9) that does not cause the pilgrims to lament about their vices (CT 4.12–13); technically the Clerk delivers this, but solely on the surface: his is a deceptively simple tale whose comedic cheer lies only in its basic premise (it is about a peasant girl who becomes marchioness, after all), and in which, as I will discuss, he encodes not only moral lessons, but moral lessons shrewdly directed back at his pilgrim audience. Like his hero Walter, the Clerk gives all the appearance of complying with the wishes of the people (or in this case, their secular representative, the Host), but in fact acts on his own terms and even at their expense.

Indeed, the Clerk’s question about array not only inherently brings to the forefront the presence of his audience but also invites the reader to contemplate the audience’s own desires—for the “riches” of literary-cultural entertainment, for protracted descriptions of attire, and arguably, for luxurious attire itself.¹⁹ Despite the fact that it is a rhetorical question and thus not meant to be answered, for instance, there are some ostensibly obvious answers to the question of why an educated narrator such as the Clerk would “make a tale” of array, most of which have to do with medieval literary theories on audience reception of fictional material: Macrobius’s influential concept of *narratio fabulosa*, for example, describes fiction as the veil or dress necessary

to express the most serious of philosophical or sacred truths (a device one would think especially pertinent to the Clerk's own ultimate allegorical leanings); Geoffrey of Vinsauf's popular *Poetria nova* also encourages lengthy passages describing women's attire as part of "the food and ample refreshment of the mind" that is *descriptio*.²⁰ Chaucer of course knew both of these texts, and his most popular work creates its own type of sartorial presence; Laura F. Hodges's scrupulous work on the lexis of clothing in the *Canterbury Tales* has uncovered the extensive range of his knowledge and interest in sartorial terminology.²¹

Importantly, however, within this larger sartorial inventory in the *Tales*, Chaucer seems to associate clothing *descriptio* at least in part with lower-class or bourgeois (versus aristocratic) tastes; for it is only in the Miller's "nyce" or silly tale (CT 1.3855), heartily enjoyed by all but the Reeve, that we find the type of lavish head-to-toe clothing description suggested in Vinsauf.²² If, therefore, Chaucer's Clerk refuses to divulge sartorial details, perhaps it is in part to contrast his tale and its heroine from the type of conspicuously ornamented object of desire such as Alisoun, whose trappings proclaim, for all to see, the newfound wealth of her carpenter husband's (and miller narrator's) social class. Moreover, if we consider that the Host's opening comment to the Clerk—that he appears like a new bride at a feast, or "sittyng at the bord" (CT 4.2–3)—works not merely as a slight about the properly modest demeanor of a clerk, but also as a reminder of the highly charged culture of consumption that makes up the tale-telling competition, in which both tales and tale-tellers, and both men and women, are continually evaluated and assessed by the other pilgrims, as metaphorical "feasts" offered up by the Host, then we can also see the Clerk's tale as a repudiation of and comment on that culture.²³ Further underscoring this reading is the way that the Clerk's question marks a thematic shift in the passage from describing how the "ladyes" dress Griselda to how "the peple" see her, from the courtly "dressing" of her crown and "setting" of her jewels to the public's "knowing" of her: "Of hire array what sholde I make a tale? / Unnethe the peple hir knew for hire fairnesse" (CT 4.383–84). The question behind the question is perhaps not *whether* or *why* array belongs in tale-telling, but *how* it belongs.²⁴

In the rest of the passage dealing with Griselda's first sartorial transformation, the Clerk maintains this uneasy balance between seeming to avoid sartorial detail and seeming to emphasize, through culturally charged terms, the public's use, abuse, and perception of her sartorial goods. Although we are clearly made to focus on the *fact* that Griselda is reclothed "fro foot to heed" (CT 4.378), for example, we hear nothing about the color, material, style, or embroidery of her attire. This dearth of detail goes against not only

literary tradition but also the long tradition of elaborate clothing symbolism and ritual in royal marriages, which used investiture as a way of performing, through careful color, embroidery, and livery symbols, the social, political, and economic import of the new alliance.²⁵ It also distinguishes itself from the extensive detail of contemporary homiletic and legislative discourses, which, as Claire Sponsler has pointed out, often “acted unwittingly as shopping lists for would-be consumers, laying out all the wares available for (forbidden) consumption.”²⁶ Instead the Clerk gives his audience a list of base generalities devoid of color, ornament, or detail: “olde geere” and “clothes” for her former peasant attire, and “corone” and “nowches” for her new courtly clothes.

These apparently generic accounts are thus easily (and I would suggest deliberately) overshadowed by the reactions they invoke. In addition to the Clerk’s own reaction to the scene in the form of his *occupatio*, and to the aforementioned reaction of “the peple” who “hardly” recognize her, for example, we also have Chaucer’s enhancement of the response to her peasant garments by the court ladies, who are “nat right glad / To handle hir clothes” (CT 4.375–76). In contrast to this threefold response, Griselda’s own reaction is duly absent; this scene is rather about the perception of the people around her to the clothes that she wears. Griselda merely forms the backdrop: she is never specifically named or even made physically visible in the passage. Instead, she becomes the blank material to be adorned with the jewels of human artifice, literally “sette . . . ful of nowches grete and smale” (CT 4.382), and the passage’s running references to *hir*, *she*, and *this mayde* become the general field against which the “wommen,” “the peple,” and the narrative “I” gauge their own prejudices and ideas about the garments.²⁷ The Clerk effectively strips the marriage ritual down to its basic structural purpose—the control of audience perception by ceremonial material goods—without appearing to indulge in those material goods himself. In the end the combination of the colorless clothing descriptions and the dramatic reactions of the people to them powerfully enlists the reader’s own imagination to fill in the narrative and aesthetic gaps regarding Griselda’s clothing—one reason, perhaps, for the heightened critical interest in hermeneutics and the word *translated* in this passage. Yet I would argue that it is in the last words of the passage—that she was translated “in swich richesse”—that much of the interpretive weight of the description lies.

Chaucer uses the word *richesse*, meaning primarily “riches,” “wealth,” or “abundance,” sparingly yet purposefully in his *Tales*, almost always invoking the notion of *temporeel riches*, or the Boethian sense of false riches of Fortune’s material goods.²⁸ The Parson describes “richesses” as the first of

three main categories of earthly pleasures that require penance (along with “honours” and “delices” [CT 10.185]), and states that those who enjoy such wealth while alive will suffer a painful fourfold poverty in hell: poverty of treasure, of meat and drink, of clothing, and of friends (CT 10.191–99). *Richesse* represents a fantasy that embodies the uncertainty and changeability of both life and its trappings; as the Parson states, “alle the riches in this world ben in aventure, and passen as a shadwe on the wal” (CT 10.1067). In Chaucer’s *Tale of Melibee*, Prudence likewise condemns the “sweete temporeel riches, and delices and honours of this world” (CT 7.1410) that have skewed Melibee’s perception away from God. That worldly *richesse* is perceived as being materialistic, corrupting, and ungodly by the Parson as well as Prudence, the two most morally upright (and excessively didactic) of Chaucer’s characters in the *Tales*, is especially enlightening, for they seem to correspond quite accurately to the Clerk’s own abstemious performance and moralizing perspective. Indeed, even in his strict economy the Clerk is careful to emphasize that the garments clothing Griselda are extreme: she is not simply translated into riches, but into “*swich* richesse” (CT 4.385; italics mine).²⁹

By far the most thorough discussion of *richesse* in Chaucer’s works and the clear source of much of the rhetoric of *richesse* in the *Tales* is his translation of Boethius’s *Consolatio Philosophiae*. The word dominates Philosophie’s discussion of “the yiftes of Fortune” (4–5) in Book II Prosa 5 of the *Boece*. Here *richesses* concern not only questions of false “beaute” and “bountee” (40) but also the excesses of “superfluyte” (78), “covetyse” (123), and, in the following meter, the “anguysschous love of havynge” (II.m.5.30–31). Like most of her teachings, Philosophie’s discussion of *richesse* quickly becomes a question about mortal self-knowledge: “Richesses ben they precieuse by the nature of hemself, or elles by the nature of the?” (II.pr.5.8–10), she asks Boethius. She interrogates the poet’s and reader’s understanding of *richesse* by revealing the buried foundations of human investments in material goods: the false sense of importance, value, and beauty they bestow; the hunger for power they induce. To Philosophie, *richesse* represents only misunderstanding and transgression—the “errour” and “folie” (II.pr.5.158) of humans, whose desire for “diverse clothynge” (II.pr.5.86) and “straunge apparailementz” (II.pr.5.160–61) condemns them to bestial ignorance about themselves and the world. Moreover, last and ironically, *richesse* also brings destitution. When in the form of money, *richesse* gains its true worth only in exchange: when it is “transferred fro o man to an othir” (II.pr.5.18–19), and more importantly, in the context of Griselda, “whan it is translated” to other people (II.pr.5.20–21). Because it cannot be shared without its value diminishing, and because the *richesse* of one brings poverty to so many others, Philosophie

depicts wealth itself as abject: “O streyte and nedy clepe I this richesse” (II. pr.5.33).

In light of Chaucer’s uses of the concept, Griselda’s sartorial transformation into *richesse* has intriguing moral implications specifically linked to her new rich clothing. Like the description of *richesse* in the *Boece*, Griselda’s transformation into “swich richesse” could test her own potential for pride and greed; like the *Boece*, it could test her self-knowledge and possible artifice; like the *Boece*, it could test her value as a possession transferred and “translated”; and finally, like the *Boece*, her transformation could be seen to test the very notion of good fortune, illustrating through Walter’s sadistic tests the abject side of *richesse*. Its consistent use by the moral figures of the Parson, Prudence, and Philosophy further suggests that the word’s placement at such a crucial moment in the *Clerk’s Tale* could be meant to trigger personal meditation on the dangers of material goods and the beauty and power they bestow. Griselda’s story certainly depicts the cyclical nature of *temporeel riches*: the arbitrary gaining and losing of material goods at the whim of Fortune, with whom Walter is repeatedly associated throughout the tale (69, 756, 812).

But importantly, although she acts as the didactic vessel, Griselda is not the recipient of the lesson of *richesse*. Like so much about Griselda, her clothing symbolism gains the necessary clarity only through comparison. The moral targets another vital character in the tale: “the peple” who gaze at her “fairnesse / Whan she translated was in swich richesse” (CT 4.384–85), and who are mentioned no less than twenty-eight times throughout the tale (the exact number, incidentally, that Griselda herself is named).³⁰ The “peple” of the *Clerk’s Tale* represent a significant elaboration on Chaucer’s part that subtly transforms the tale’s social framework; as Lynn Staley has pointed out, Chaucer’s creation of “a single force, point of view, and voice that he designates as ‘the people’” diverges substantially from the representative mix of lesser nobles and courtiers in Petrarch’s tale.³¹ Susan Yager also argues that the distinction between the terms “peple” and “folk” in this tale forms part of Chaucer’s larger exploration of intellectual, behavioral, and class differences between the ignorant many and the refined and knowledgeable few.³²

Unlike Griselda, the Clerk’s “peple” are ripe for a lesson on the dangers of temporal riches. For one, their collective desire maintains a formidable presence throughout this poem, from their initial request of Walter that he “‘hastily to wyve’” (CT 4.140), which spurs the central action of the poem, to Walter’s own repeated assertions to Griselda that his (monstrous) actions toward her are not his, but his people’s wishes—“‘Nat as I wolde, but as my peple leste’” (CT 4.490). Yet even more palpable than the people’s desire, or

“poeplissh appetit” as Yager calls it, quoting Criseyde, is their *observing* and *watching* of Griselda: they witness nearly every narrated action between Walter and Griselda, beginning with the moment Walter enters Janicula’s house to ask for her hand, and even those things that they do not literally witness, such as Walter’s ‘murdering’ of his children, eventually come “to the peples ere” (CT 4.727).³³ Essential to the related themes of desire and surveillance is the people’s collective gaze at Griselda’s array, which first emerges in this scene of her translation into *richesse* and grows increasingly significant with each subsequent scene of sartorial consequence. As we ultimately find out, while Walter does not marry Griselda for her *richesse* (CT 4.795), it seems that “the peple” do.

GRISELDA’S RUDENESSE

The problematic material subtext of Griselda’s *richesse* accrues its full weight only when compared to her corresponding aesthetic of *rudenesse*. The Clerk describes Griselda as born and raised in “rudenesse” (CT 4.397), an attribute that manifests itself physically first in her “rudely” unkempt hair (CT 4.380) when Walter first has her transformed into *richesse*, and later in the old “rude” cloth (CT 4.916) that her father places on her shoulders after her exile. The latter is a garment so wrought with holes that, again according to Chaucer’s elaboration of his sources, it has lost its fundamental purpose of concealing her body:

And with hire olde coote, as it myghte be
 He covered hire, ful sorwefully wepynge.
 But on hire body myghte he it nat brynge,
 For rude was the clooth, and moore of age
 By dayes fele than at hire mariage.
 (CT 4.913–17)

This torn garment is arguably the most memorable image in the *Clerk’s Tale*.³⁴ Ostensibly it is a symbol of pared-down simplicity like the Clerk’s own threadbare garments, used to counter the *richesse* in which Walter had clothed her and of which he had her stripped. Griselda’s stoic bearing of her ragged clothing can thus be said to embody a lesson about the false importance of material goods and clothing in itself. But it is the Clerk’s almost obsessive reiteration and visualization of this “rude” attire that seems to encompass a most fascinating moral directive, for Griselda’s torn garments are continually

and repeatedly mentioned in a way that her garments of *richesse* are not. In fact, between the moment in which she dons the *olde coote* and the moment she reconciles with Walter, Griselda's decrepit garments are described no less than nine times: her clothing is of "rude . . . clooth" and of great "age" (CT 4.916); "badde" and "yvel" (CT 4.965); "rude" and "eek torent" (CT 4.1012); "povre" (CT 4.1020); "povreliche" (CT 4.1055); and once again, "rude" (CT 4.1116).

The prominent aesthetic of this garment in a tale that goes out of its way to strip itself of imagery, and the tale's blunt insistence that we reimagine Griselda's rags over and over, work to implicate and then appropriate visual as well as material modes of consumption. For while the *Clerk's Tale's* exploration of *gentillesse* endeavors to compare moral and material treasures more broadly, the Clerk's careful handling of Griselda's appearance serves specifically to highlight and categorize the way people perceive and desire material ornament and especially clothing. When he first introduces his heroine, the Clerk takes care to emphasize how others view her low socioeconomic status: her father is not merely poor, he is the person that even the "povre folk" (CT 4.204) hold to be the "povrest of hem alle" (CT 4.205); correspondingly, it is upon Griselda as a "povre creature" (CT 4.232) that Walter first literally and metaphorically "sette his ye" (CT 4.233). Furthermore, while the Clerk makes an initial gesture toward Griselda's physical attractiveness to others—she is "fair ynogh to sighte" (CT 4.209)—he immediately and somewhat self-consciously channels this into a description of *moral* rather than physical "beautee":

But for to speke of vertuous beautee,
 Thanne was she oon the faireste under sonne;
 For povreliche yfostred up was she,
 No likerous lust was thurgh hire herte yronne.
 (CT 4.211–14)

Yet even when he purports to avoid material description here, he includes a significant detail about consumer desire: unlike the Miller's bourgeois Alison, who has a "likerous ye" (CT 1.3244) to go with her eye-catching clothing, Griselda's poor upbringing ensures that she carries no greedy desire or "likerous lust" in her heart.³⁵ In the Clerk's view, Griselda's own lack of desire is inversely proportionate to her beauty and her fairness—a "fairnesse," we remember, that "the peple" can only see after her transformation into *richesse*.

Indeed, according to the Clerk, to recognize (Griselda's) true value one

must have the ability to look not only through rhetorical artifice (as he makes clear in his allegorical interpretation of Griselda at the end of the tale) but also through *artificial* trappings, which ultimately Walter has the capacity to do but his “peple” do not. The Clerk takes the time to clarify, for instance, that when Walter gazes at peasant Griselda before choosing her as his wife, he does not look at her with lascivious or foolish intentions, but in a serious manner:

And whan it fil that he myghte hire espye,
 He noght with wantown lookyng of folye
 His eyen caste on hire, but in sad wyse
 Upon hir chiere he wolde hym ofte avyse.
 (CT 4.235–38)

The Clerk further presents his assessment of Walter’s clear-sightedness in direct contrast with the flawed or absent “insight” of the people:

For thogh the peple have no greet insight
 In vertu, he considered ful right
 Hir bountee, and disposed that he wolde
 Wedde hire oonly, if evere he wedde sholde.
 (CT 4.242–45)

According to the Clerk’s subjective evaluation, just as Walter’s “sad” or serious way of looking corresponds to his keen perception of Griselda’s value despite her rude clothing, so the people’s lack of “insight”—literally, their inability to see *into*, or beyond the surface—corresponds to their ultimate “[u]nsad” nature (CT 4.995) and their superficial attachment to her *richesse*. The people’s perception thus by default becomes identified with the “wantown lookyng of folye” that Walter avoids. This problematic looking evokes what Chaucer’s Parson elsewhere calls people’s “coveitise of eyen” (CT 4.852)—namely, the obsessive gazing at the opposite sex that both incites and is incited by conspicuous consumption. The Parson specifically links wasteful consumption and “fool lookynge” (CT 4.852) under the sin of *luxuria*, denouncing men and especially women whose lechery causes them to “dispenden . . . hir catel and substaunce” on the opposite sex (CT 4.848).³⁶ In the *Clerk’s Tale*, the people’s impaired (in)sight means they literally cannot understand who or even what Griselda is when she returns to her *rudenesse*: “they wondren what she myghte bee / That in so povre array was for to see” (CT 4.1019–20).

Hence the Clerk assures that it is the literal sight of copious luxurious clothes that makes the people finally betray Griselda for (what they think is) her younger, richer replacement. When Walter's "newe markysesse" (CT 4.942) arrives with her brother, the people interpret her superior worth based solely upon her sumptuous appearance, and for the first time they begin to question Griselda's own merit:

For which the peple ran to seen the sighte
 Of hire array, so richely biseye;
 And thanne at erst amonges hem they seye
 That Walter was no fool, thogh that hym leste
 To chaunge his wyf, for it was for the beste.
 (CT 4.983–87)

The repeated emphasis on seeing in this passage, the twofold *seen the sighte* followed by *biseye*, "good-looking," further underscores the people's optical voracity for sartorial riches and novelty.³⁷ Griselda, whose rude clothes are correspondingly described a few lines earlier as "yvel biseye" (CT 4.965), and who even in her former role as Walter's wife displayed "[n]o pompe, no semblant of roialtee" (CT 4.928), cannot compare, in the public's view, to "swich pompe and richesse" (CT 4.943), an exhibition so grand that, as the Clerk states, "nevere was ther seyn with mannes ye / So noble array in al West Lumbardye" (CT 4.944–45). Regardless of her dutiful and beneficial service as their marchioness, her promotion of the "commune profit" (CT 4.431) and her devotion to "[p]eple to save and every wrong t'amende" (CT 4.441), like the "olde" rags that she wears, Griselda is cast away by the fickle public in favor of the more visually stimulating "newe" array and *richesse*.

Moreover, just in case his audience missed the moral, the Clerk explicitly emphasizes the people's fickleness in the following outburst about their changefulness and vulnerability to novelty, which does not exist in Chaucer's sources:

'O stormy peple! Unsad and evere untrewel!
 Ay undiscreet and chaungynge as a fane!
 Delitynge evere in rumbul that is newe,
 For lyk the moone ay wexe ye and wane!
 (CT 4.995–98)

It is in this turbulent fickleness that we find the closest correlation between the "peple" of the *Clerk's Tale* and the social disruption that John M. Ganim

finds associated with the “peple” in Chaucer’s other work.³⁸ Yet here the Clerk provides his statement with extra authority by placing it in the mouths of some of the “folk” themselves, thus dividing the public according to whether they are “[u]nsad” or “sadde” (CT 4.995, 1002), frivolous or serious, unstable or stable. While the “[u]nsad” people gaze voraciously “up and down” at the “newe lady” (CT 4.1003, 1005), the “sadde folk,” like “sad” Walter earlier (CT 4.1002, 237), have the ability to see more clearly and thus avoid the allure of “noveltee” (CT 4.1004).

In this focus on the seductive powers of material novelty and its link to changefulness, the *Clerk’s Tale* suggests a more direct relation to contemporary discourses about clothing and consumption. As Stella Mary Newton has pointed out, one larger discourse that emerged in fourteenth-century England articulated courtly fashion as a choice between two aesthetics: that of the new style [*de novo modo*] and that of the old style [*de antiquo modo*].³⁹ Thus, like his use of *richesse*, the Clerk’s descriptions of Griselda’s clothes as either “al newe” (CT 4.378) or “olde” (CT 4.913), and his subsequent condemnation of “the peple” who allow their loyalty to be purchased by “noveltee,” work simultaneously as deceptively simple descriptions that correlate to his seemingly “pleyn” style and as phrases that would have carried strong moral and material resonance in Chaucer’s world.

Chaucer’s broader use of the word “newe” in his *Tales* underscores this ostensible purpose in the *Clerk’s Tale* and also suggests more specifically which Canterbury pilgrims the Clerk’s fickle, materially inclined “peple” most closely resemble. The word most often appears to describe the intersecting arenas of fashion and commerce. In the *General Prologue*, the “newe world” (CT 1.176) that the pleasure-loving Monk admires and the new style, or “newe jet” (CT 1.682) that the corrupt Pardoner thinks he performs is that embodied by the liveried guildsmen, with their instruments arrayed “[f]ul fressh and newe” (CT 1.365), and by the wealthy, cloth-making Wife of Bath in her “ful moyste and newe” shoes (CT 1.457). Such “newe” purchases resonate not only with English commercial enterprise but also with the uniqueness of foreign goods, for in the *Man of Law’s Tale*, it is the novelty of “newe” Eastern goods—specifically “[c]lothes of gold, and satyns riche of hewe” (CT 2.137)—that instills the Western desire for commercial exchange and that enriches Eastern merchants (CT 2.138–40). Such references to the desire for and the aesthetic of “newe” things can be found in various forms throughout the *Tales*; even Griselda, who verbalizes her opinion so rarely, declares, when Walter exiles her, that “[l]ove is noght oold as whan that it is newe” (CT 4.857). Although many types of pilgrims wear fashions that can and should be perceived as novel, however—the Merchant and the Squire to name a

few—Chaucer’s specific use of the word “newe” in relation to material goods, like his use of sartorial *descriptio*, appears primarily in connection with the lower classes or the newly rich bourgeoisie such as the guildsmen and the Wife of Bath. Even peasants obtain cherished “newe” objects; in the *Friar’s Tale* for example, it is out of protection for her “‘newe panne” (CT 3.1614) that the old peasant woman finally curses (and thus condemns) the fraudulent summoner to his infernal fate. In this way the “newe” object, with its self-conscious link to purchasing, spending, and exchanging, can be seen to carry with it an oblique class indicator, or “distinction,” in Bourdieu’s sense, whether it implies a coveted necessity (the old peasant’s pan) or conspicuous consumption (the Wife’s shoes).

By specifically associating new fashions and other new objects with social classes *other* than the aristocracy, who were traditionally associated with vestimentary novelty and luxury goods, Chaucer appears to be responding in a particular way to the changing consumer habits of his culture. Consumer goods, according to Grant McCracken, work as “bridges to displaced meaning,” or as a way for consumers to recover both individual and cultural hopes and ideals: coveted goods represent, he says, “not who we are, but who we wish we were.”⁴⁰ As medieval historians have pointed out, one curious aspect of medieval English merchants is that in this period of burgeoning mercantile growth, they allocated their newfound wealth toward consumption rather than investment, choosing to imitate the aristocracy rather than expand their commercial businesses.⁴¹ Thus, rather than use their newfound powers to create a new, mercantile identity, they attempted to purchase social status, to use their goods as a conduit to the social performances of the aristocracy. The typical complaint about this new kind of spending was that it confused social hierarchy, making it difficult for a person to distinguish social superiors from the middling and lower classes; at the heart of this discourse is the idea that *all* classes were wearing the same indistinguishable new styles. Chaucer appears to offer another kind of social commentary, displacing the cult of newness almost exclusively onto the mercantile and lower classes, and thus ascribing to them alone the troubling questions about aesthetic changeability and novelty as part of the larger problem of superficial social aspiration. In the same way that Durand attempted to isolate clerkly attire from the fashion system of lay culture, claiming for it a separate and stable aesthetic rooted in biblical directives, so Chaucer presents a discourse that attempts to distinguish aristocrats from the consumer-driven fashions of their social inferiors.⁴²

In this context Walter’s lavish production of his fictional marriage to a “newe lady” (CT 4.1005)—which the Clerk points out is “gretter of costage”

than his original marriage (*CT* 4.1126–27)—can be understood as a theatrical display of the emptiness of such material novelty; a revelation about the level of public seduction and deception that money and costume can accomplish. Once again, the Clerk ensures that Walter is the only one who knows the ostensible ‘truth’ behind the dazzling surface, behind the material dramatics of “pompe and riches” into which the frivolous “peple” have bought. Ironically, his last-minute substitution of “povre” Griselda in her “rude” “olde coote” for the “newe lady” whose array is “so richely biseye” enacts the type of false advertising and bait-and-switch mercantile tactics deplored in Chaucer’s London.⁴³ Yet unlike these commercial practices, the Clerk’s formulation of Walter’s manipulation of material goods strives not to fool the people into thinking that what is “olde” is “newe,” but rather once again to reevaluate the terms of their (visual) consumption, so that *rudenesse* supplants *richesse* as the figurehead of pomp and circumstance, and as the focus of spectacle and celebration. Just as the Clerk links new *richesse* with changeability, deception, and the fickleness of the commons, so he claims old *rudenesse* as a marker of the beauty, prosperity, and nobility of virtuous constancy.

In the end the Clerk’s inversion of the cultural categories of new and old, *richesse* and *rudenesse* in his tale does more than invoke the ‘poverty of riches’ theme of his Christian asceticism. In its aligning of material comprehension according to sociopolitical status—Walter’s superb insight regarding Griselda’s garments versus the people’s faulty sight, which is underscored by the larger divide between aristocratic and middle-class relationships to newness in the *Tales*—the *Clerk’s Tale* reveals a more particular investment in the material status of its listeners. We are invited to compare Griselda’s *rude* garments not only to her former *richesse* and to the *richesse* of Walter’s fictional new wife, but to the new *richesse* of the listening audience—Walter’s, the Clerk’s, and Chaucer’s. It is no accident, for instance, that the two pilgrims with whom the Clerk and his tale most closely interact are the *nouveaux riches* Merchant and Wife of Bath, whose own lavish attire proclaims their positions as the *Tales’* most prominent representatives of England’s burgeoning cloth trade and rising mercantile classes.⁴⁴ In direct opposition to the threadbare frugality of the Clerk and his *povre* Griselda, the *General Prologue* descriptions of the Merchant and the Wife, it is well known, are laden with references to sartorial wealth: in addition to her moist “newe” shoes (*CT* 1.457), at church the Wife wears many layers of “fyne” coverchiefs, and “fyn” red hose (*CT* 1.453, 456), while the Merchant wears a Flemish beaver hat, fashionable polychrome “mottelee” clothes, and “bootes clasped faire and fetisly” (*CT* 1.271–73).⁴⁵ The Merchant’s lucrative financial dealings—his “bargaynes” and “chevyssaunce” (*CT* 1.282)—and

the Wife's role as a rich widow and successful clothmaker tie their sumptuary excesses to the expansive influence of mercantile wealth in fourteenth-century culture.

To put it briefly, the connections between the Clerk and these two figures of mercantile *richesse* go beyond simple contrasting aesthetics. In their corresponding themes of perspectives skewed by material wealth, penetrating insight versus superficial sight, and the eroticization of newness—new spouses, new clothes, and even new bodies (in the case of the Wife's old crone)—the three tales suggest a larger dialectic between the literary and the material, with the ultimate effect of unsettling the Clerk's spiritual allegory of his tale and underscoring its more material themes. The desireless Griselda might be seen as the antitype to the appetitive May and Alisoun of Bath, and to the more general bourgeois predicament of a husband not prepared for an equal partner who can both assert her own desires and manipulate her reality to satiate them, but she is also a comment *on* them, and thus cannot be understood, or arguably even exist, in isolation from them.⁴⁶ As I will discuss in the next section, this is especially true for the mercantile, domineering Wife of Bath and her "secte" of material women.

APPETITIVE *ARCHEWYVES*

While throughout his tale the Clerk positions Griselda's fluctuating sartorial symbolism more generally in relation to the shallow gaze of the "peple" and their implied pilgrim contingent, in the final words of his tale and in the subsequent *Envoy* he explicitly narrows the tale's directive into a practical, material interpretation for a more specific type of practical, material listener: the Wife of Bath "and al hire secte" (CT 4.1170–71).⁴⁷ Whether this "secte" carries its sexual or legal meaning, or whether it refers to the Wife's materialist *cause célèbre*, it finally makes overt the heretofore veiled gendering of the Clerk's antimaterialism.⁴⁸ This gendering is partly, but not wholly, a response to the Wife of Bath and her particular form of bourgeois materialism and marital economics. In a larger sense it taps into the moralizing sumptuary discourses of Chaucer's world, in which the category of person most associated with changeability and material desires, and thus that most likely to be the implied target of these themes in the *Clerk's Tale*, is the medieval woman or wife.⁴⁹ Tellingly, as a temptation in the human stages in life, *richesse* was thought to be especially pertinent for women—women being, in Diane Owen Hughes's words, the "ultimate symbol of a too transitory material world, corrupted initially by Eve's sin."⁵⁰

The medieval tradition of seeing Griselda as a type of mirror for women underscores the Clerk's own possible objective in this regard. Roberta L. Krueger has recently outlined the trope of impossibility through which Boccaccio and Petrarch compare Griselda to contemporary wives, a theme reformulated into Griselda's role as a "biau mirror," or beautiful mirror for wives in the French translations by Philippe de Mézières and the *Le Ménagier de Paris*, and then later challenged by Christine de Pizan in her *Cité des Dames*.⁵¹ Susan Crane has likewise pointed to the "reorientation toward exemplarity for women" in Chaucer's own version and in his anonymous French source, *Le Livre Griseldis*, which states in its preface that it has been created "à l'exemple des femmes mariees et toutes autres" [as an example for married women and all other women].⁵²

When read with an eye toward the Clerk's acknowledged female audience and within the larger context of the Griselda tale as a mirror for women, the Clerk's use of sartorial symbols suggest even stronger comparisons to contemporary wives and their sumptuary excesses. In particular, his gendered allusions to attire highlight the substantial sumptuary component of marital conflict in this period. When placed in the context of contemporary women's marital rights, for example, the "smok" that Griselda requests of Walter at the dissolution of their marriage can be seen as a barbed reminder to English wives of their absolute lack of personal property rights. On the one hand Griselda's smock works as a moral exemplum against women's attachment to their finery, the literal manifestation of the sartorial humility the Wife of Bath lacks: "In habit maad with chastitee and shame / Ye wommen shul apparaille yow," the Wife quotes one husband as saying, "And noght in tressed heer and gay perree, / As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche" (CT 3.342–45). On the other hand, the scene is steeped in a commercial rhetoric that locates the smock in the realm of marital, sexual, and economic exchange: Griselda pointedly returns to Walter "your clothyng . . . your wed-dynge ryng," and "yourre jueles," and demands the smock in clear terms of compensatory payment "in gerdon of my maydenhede" and "to my meede" (CT 4.867–69, 883, 886; italics mine).

Importantly, while Chaucer in large part inherits these themes from his sources, he also enhances the material reality of the scene by adding Walter's reply to Griselda that she may have "the smok . . . that thou hast on thy bak" (CT 4.890). In the same way that Italian audiences would have recognized the vesting and divesting of Griselda as part of the social practices around their marriage rituals, as Christiane Klapisch-Zuber has discussed, so English audiences would likely have recognized this sole garment "on thy bak" as the one personal item that a husband was legally required to bequeath

to his wife on his death.⁵³ Despite Chaucer's depiction of the widow of Bath as gaining much wealth through the gifts "yeven" to her by her rich old husbands (*CT* 3.631), according to English common law, the husband, who owned outright all of the couple's personal property, was not legally required to return a woman's dowry or any other private item, with one exception: according to the law of *paraphernalia* rights, the woman had to be allowed one piece of "necessary" clothing—i.e., the clothing on her back.⁵⁴ In stipulating that Griselda, like a "wydwe" (*CT* 4.836), leaves the marriage with only the garment on her back and returns all other personal items to Walter, the Clerk emphasizes English women's own meager legal status regarding the goods and clothes with which they adorn themselves.

Chaucer's principal addition to Griselda's wardrobe, the "clooth of gold that brighte shoon" (*CT* 4.1117) in which she is dressed after her third and final stripping, also extends the Clerk's rhetoric against ostentatious wives. On the surface the garment represents the long-overdue end to Griselda's suffering; after proving herself worthy, she, like Job, has her fortunes restored and receives her rightful place according to her *gentillesse* and humility. In late-medieval Europe "clooth of gold" was a specific and highly coveted material good; the pinnacle of sumptuous display, it was usually worn and exchanged by nobility and the very elite of the social strata. By the late fourteenth century, however, sumptuary legislation barring such material from the lower and middle classes suggests that it had become problematically accessible.⁵⁵ "Clothes of gold," we remember, top the list of the "newe" vestimentary commodities that the wealthy Syrian merchants of the *Man of Law's Tale* bring for trading (*CT* 2.137). The immorality of such clothing became a favorite topic of sermonizers; the fourteenth-century preacher Thomas Wimbeldon, for example, explicitly uses the Job passage referred to in the *Clerk's Tale* to condemn luxurious clothes and other riches: "For we beþ / nouȝt gete wiþ riche cloþis, neiþer bore wiþ gold ne wiþ / siluer. Ynakid he bryngeþ vs in to þe world, nedy of mete, / cloþynge and drynke."⁵⁶

Moreover, a few stanzas after describing Griselda's superior garment, the Clerk offers a contrasting image in the impure metaphorical "gold" of contemporary wives, which, he says, would not hold up under testing the way Griselda did: "the gold of hem hath now so badde alayes / With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair at ye, / It wolde rather breste a-two than plye" (*CT* 4.1167–69).⁵⁷ Griselda's pure gold clothing works nicely to contrast the flashy but substandard gold of contemporary women, yet it still presents a problem with regard to the Clerk's larger rhetorical project: that is, how can he reward Griselda's humility with gold clothing without engaging in and encouraging the very artifice and covetousness that he shuns? Once again, the Clerk seems

to find an answer to this dilemma in the material consciousness of his ever-present, ever-watching—and this time, explicitly gendered—fictional audience. Until this moment in the text women have interacted with Griselda's clothing only as vehicles for Walter's power: Walter oversees the measurement of Griselda's first set of clothes on a "mayde lyk to hire stature" (CT 4.257), and as we have seen, before his first marriage he orders "the women" to strip her of her *rude* clothes and dress her in *richesse*. In regard to her gold clothing, however, for the first time Walter does not instigate Griselda's change of clothes. The *Clerk's Tale* makes no indication that Walter decrees or even knows in advance about Griselda's final "clooth of gold"; rather, it is a group of anonymous watchful "ladyes" (perhaps the same aforementioned women) who discreetly take her away to strip and to reclothe her when they see the right moment in the festivities: "whan that they hir tyme say" (CT 4.1114). While, as Crane has pointed out, the women's actions effectively condone Walter's treatment of his wife and even "remake" their marriage, the implications of the scene also seem inherently to lessen and loosen Walter's power over ritualized vesting.⁵⁸ This text has gone out of its way to locate the power of women's clothing symbolism in the hands of recognized patriarchal figures (husband, ruler, father), and thus also to keep true to its source texts, but now in its final hour it places Griselda's ultimate sartorial transformation entirely in the hands of anonymous female revelers. It seems to be no accident that our first real glimpse at female agency in this tale concerns a socially savvy and upwardly mobile costume change, nor that *this* particular moment has been allocated as women's "tyme" to step forward and intervene in the presentation of *povre* Griselda.

Despite his opening rhetoric of dismissal, the Clerkly narrator has repeatedly shown that sartorial symbolism holds immense social, political, economic, and even spiritual importance, and thus in the context of his own tale it would appear that the reveling women who dress Griselda of their own accord have either been given or usurped some control. This final and unusual scene of Griselda's private stripping and public acceptance (versus her heretofore public stripping and private acceptance) gains more currency when we consider the subtext of marital ownership of material goods in this tale and *Envoy*, and also the lengths to which the Clerk seems willing to go here to conceal any potential for real resistance from his listeners. For, as if on cue, the sartorial transformation brought about by these women triggers the beginning of the end of the tale. The following stanza initiates a temporal and spatial retreat into rhetorical synopsis and completion: "Thus hath this pitous day a blisful ende" (CT 4.1121), concludes the Clerk, a remark that swiftly unites Griselda's final clothing transformation, the joyful "murthe and revel"

(CT 4.1123) of the people, and the ensuing, two-stanza happy ending of his Griselda narrative. The actions of “thise ladyes” thus mark an important shift in the tale, for the Clerk’s apparent transfer of the sartorial matter from serious Walter to the reveling women, and his related move from “pitous” to “blisful,” foreshadow the larger shift that he makes in and around his *Envoy* a few stanzas later, when he loosens his formal structure and tone and appears to embrace the perspective of the Wife of Bath “and al hire secte”: “I wol with lusty herte, fressh and grene, / Seyn yow a song to glade yow, I wene” (CT 4.1173–74). Not surprisingly, however, his apparent (and, I might add, rather late) appeal to the pleasure of his listeners comes with its own inherent reproach, for in order to present this new song, he says, he must “stynte of ernestful matere” (CT 4.1175). Thus, as the Clerk constructs it, the *Envoy* in honor of all that is new, desirous, and entertaining, not to mention in honor of the “maistrie” of women (CT 4.1172), is frivolous and superfluous: an unnecessary, if popular and fashionable, new adornment to his heretofore “ernestful” tale.

As part of his strategy of undercutting the ornamental, the pleasurable, the popular, and the feminine, the Clerk situates his *Envoy* in the belief that men’s and women’s modes and materials of interpretation dramatically differ, for his shift from addressing “lordynges” (CT 4.1163) to addressing “noble wyves” (CT 4.1183) crucially coincides with his shift from insisting that the tale be read as allegory for the trials of the Christian soul (CT 4.1142–48) to his ultimate suggestion that the tale pertains to the material reality of contemporary “archewyves” (CT 4.1195). This is especially clear at the end of the *Envoy*, when the Clerk adopts the language of the Wife of Bath (who adopted the language of the *Roman de la Rose*) to advise women on how to manipulate their material performances for social gain:⁵⁹

If thou be fair, ther folk been in presence,
 Shewe thou thy visage and thyn apparaille;
 If thou be foul, be fre of thy dispence;
 To gete thee freendes ay do thy travaille;
 Be ay of chiere as light as leef on lynde,
 And lat hym care, and wepe, and wrynge, and waille!
 (CT 4.1207–12)

This final stanza positions Griselda most clearly as the unstated counterexample to contemporary women’s production of self-presentation. While she was “ay oon in herte and in visage,” for example (CT 4.711), here we have the womanly manipulation of both “visage” and “apparaille.” Because *visage*,

from Latin *uisus*, “sight,” means both “face” (or “physical appearance”) and “to face” something, it is an apt word for Chaucer to explore how (male) *seeing* loses its power in the face of the female performance of *being seen*.⁶⁰ Moreover, while Griselda exhibited no emotion when repeatedly stripped and dressed by her spouse, contemporary women almost inadvertently bring their spouses to dramatic displays of weeping with their consumption and ostentation. And finally, while Griselda worked untiringly with little interest in clothes or *richesse*, here contemporary women’s work, or *travaille*, is their exuberant dressing and spending.⁶¹ This crucial troping of consumers as workers taps into what de Certeau has described as the active processes of consumption, by which consumption itself becomes not only a type of production, but also a practice or method of resistance for the repressed.⁶² This type of resistance informs the sum and substance of the *Envoy*, in which women’s “work” of *apparaille* and *dispenche* determines not only their marital relationships but also women’s roles in the greater community and even their reception of fictional tales such as Griselda’s.

The *Envoy*’s anonymous arch wives obviously get much of their general momentum from their explicit association with the rebellious Wife of Bath. One specific and underexamined similarity is that Wife’s *Tale* also ends in a fervent state of conflict between husbands’ general niggardliness and wives’ love of *dispenche*. For while the Wife humorously draws her earlier tale to a close by imagining a world in which Christ sends to women “housbondes meeke, yonge, and fressh abedde” (CT 3.1259) with which to live their long, ever-joyous lives, she actually ends on a much angrier and arguably more revealing note, in which she curses “olde and angry nygardes of dispenche,” asking God to cut short their lives with the “verray pestilence” (CT 3.1263–64). After the extended talk about sexual, rhetorical, social, and intellectual “sovereignty” throughout her *Prologue* and *Tale*, then, the Wife chooses as her ultimate word on the subject *consumer* sovereignty.⁶³ Despite the Wife of Bath’s jolly resistance to her various husbands’ attempts to curb her sartorial spending and display in her *Prologue* (“Thou shalt nat bothe, thogh that thou were wood, / Be maister of my body and of my good,” she declares [CT 3.313–14]), it seems she cannot encompass these misers neatly into her fantasy of feminine dominance, and the undisguised resentment they bring out in the normally humorous if histrionic Wife lingers after her own formidable verbal presence has ended.

Considering the Clerk’s larger rhetoric of sartorial *richesse* and *rudenesse* and his overt address to the Wife of Bath, it is no coincidence that this theme of *dispenche* reemerges at the end of his *Envoy*. In fact, from its inception the *Envoy* seems implicitly to frame its marital concerns as sumptuary concerns.

The Clerk's reference to Griselda at the beginning of the *Envoy*—his last mention of her—asks us to envision her not only “deed” and buried in Italy (*CT* 4.1177–78) but as the potential victim of a curiously literal mode of consumption—that is, in the entrails of that fabled ingester of patient wives, Chichevache:

O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,
 Lat noon humylitee youre tonge naille,
 Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence
 To write of yow a storie of swich mervaille
 As of Grisildis pacient and kynde,
 Lest Chichevache yow swelwe in hire entraille!
 (*CT* 4.1183–88)

This striking depiction of the public reception of stories as a female cow that eats patient wives has one target and one immediate parallel: the “noble wyves” to whom these words are addressed, and who have at this moment received the Clerk's tale of Griselda. Yet this is not merely about a cannibalistic feminine that metaphorically consumes both masculine writing and a favorite subject of masculine writing, feminine patience. Rather, these lines form part of a greater context of consumption in the *Envoy* that harnesses more traditional misogynist themes of female oral rapaciousness and verbosity to contemporary material modes of consumption, women's *apparaille* and *dispenche*. As I will discuss in the next section, these lines ensure that the figure of Griselda becomes inextricably connected with Chichevache and with the motif of female consumer appetite in later traditions.

Chichevache signifies one of the few fabled monsters of medieval origin—she emerges for the first time in fourteenth-century French and English texts—and she is a paradoxical figure: a beast both monstrous and pitiful whose only food consists of patient and virtuous wives, and thus who almost dies of starvation from lack thereof. While her gender is usually designated as feminine, a clear tradition of associating the beast with the abused husband exists; Jehan le Fèvre's *Lamentations de Mathéolus* (a text Chaucer likely knew, and which may have been the model for Jankyn's book of wicked wives) positions *himself* as the poor beast, monstrously shrunk and emasculated by his proud beast of a wife.⁶⁴ The idea that Chichevache might represent piteous, feminized husbands starved of their capacity to ‘consume’ their wives, and the corresponding aesthetic of the emaciated miser-husband consumed by proud, horned, ostentatious wives (in the figure of Chichevache's mate, Bicorn), fits very easily into the larger network

of sartorial discourses that underline the Clerk's dialectic of marital rivalry in his *Envoy*.

I have written elsewhere about the importance of the mythical Chichevache as a figure for consumer appetite in the late Middle Ages.⁶⁵ Part of its cultural function is aesthetic. The obvious correlation to the emaciated creature would be the ascetic Clerk himself, who is described in the *General Prologue* as not merely "nat right fat," but rather so thin as to look "holwe," with a horse that is also "[a]s leene . . . as is a rake" (CT 1.288, 289, 287). Aesthetically contrasted to his bony frame is the bodily girth of the Wife of Bath to whom the Clerk's envoy is addressed, with her "hipes large" (CT 1.472), and that of the other battle-ready "archewyves" of the *Envoy*, whom he describes as "strong as is a greet camaille" (CT 4.1196). But in fourteenth-century England Chichevache offered another important cultural function, the Middle English word "chinche," or "chiche" referring not to a skinny person, as the usual translation of "skinny cow" suggests, but to "a person who is stingy, miserly, or greedy; a niggard, miser."⁶⁶ The closest synonym to our beast's name, a word very close in spirit to *chincheface*, is "chinchehede," which was used as a term for greediness.⁶⁷ Commonly employed in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English texts, "chinche" is usually associated with avarice and *coveitise*. Chaucer's Prudence, for example, uses the term several times to lecture Melibee on the proper way to use wealth. For instance, she quotes Cato as saying:

'Use . . . thy riches that thou has gotten / in swich a manere that men have no matiere ne cause to calle thee neither wrecche ne chynche, / for it is a greet shame to a man to have a povere herte and a riche purs. / . . . The goodes that thou hast ygeten, use hem by mesure.' (CT 7.1601–4)

Like Chichevache, misers and other avaricious figures were often represented as emaciated, such as Langland's Coveitise, "[s]o hungrily and holwe . . . hym loked."⁶⁸ The miser constitutes one half of a twofold medieval understanding of avarice: on the one hand, as Chaucer's Prudence states, avarice entails excessive hoarding or spending: "For right as men blamen an avaricious man by cause of his scarsetee and *chyncherie* / in the same wise is he to blame that spendeth over-largely (CT 7.1599–600; italics mine). On the other hand, as Chaucer's Parson makes clear, avarice is "a likerousnesse in herte to have erthely thynges," and entails simply coveting as well as actually purchasing material things: "Coveitise is for to coveite swiche thynges as thou hast nat; and Avarice is for to withholde and kepe swiche thynges as thou hast, withoute rightful nede" (CT 10.740, 743). In addition to her appearance, then,

Chichevache could be said to embody both types of avarice in other ways: while her name seems to connote miserliness, Chichevache's appetite—her desperate need to consume patient women, something she cannot have—seems to represent *coveitise*.

If, according to the Wife of Bath, among others, the stereotypically “bad” husband is the miser, a *chiche*, then according to the Clerk, the stereotypically “bad” wife is extravagant and wasteful. With the trope of gendered consumer habits already buried in the marital debate in this way, the introduction of Chichevache, a miser-cow that threatens to “swelwe” women like Griselda, serves the added purpose of associating physical with material consumption. As Chaucer's Prudence states (quoting Augustine this time): “the avaricious man is likned unto helle, / that the moore it swelweth the moore desir it hath to swelwe and devoure” (CT 7.1616–17).

Even Chaucer's changing of the name “Chicheface” to “Chichevache,” miser-cow, which adds a new level of comedic domestication to the beast, can be seen in terms of its connection to avarice. Chaucer's exhortation to turn away from temporal goods in his popular Boethian poem “Truth,” for example, includes a telling pun on the word “vache” in the *Envoy*. Here the word can refer either to the prosperous courtier Sir Philip de la Vache, or to a more universal *vache*: the materialistic human as “beste” trapped in his worldly “wildernesse” (17) which is also his cage: “Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth beste, out of thy stal!” (18).⁶⁹ In either case, Chaucer counsils the *beste* or *vache* in this poem to “look up” (19) from worldly distractions, to “[h]old the heye wey” (20) and “[d]istreyne thy lust” (27) and to turn instead to “hevenlich mede” (27).⁷⁰ In this way the poem follows Boethius's trope of moral vices (and particularly the love of material goods) turning the human into a beast: in the words of Chaucer's *Boece*, “he that forleteth bounte and prowess, he forletith to ben a man; syn he ne may nat passe into the condicion of God, he is torned into a beeste” (4.pr.3.123–26).⁷¹

Not only love of attire in general, but also specifically *women's* love of attire in late-medieval Europe was said to metaphorically consume men in various ways, from the ravishment men experienced by looking at women's clothing, to the entrapment of their souls by women “wantonly adorned,” to the ruination of husbands' fortunes by wives' lavish spending on attire.⁷² England's own growing cultural concern about material property and subjectivity took on special meaning with regard to lower- and middle-class women for several reasons, among them, women's symbolic status as commodities, their traditional role as figures for men's adornment, and their new importance in post-plague market production, all of which played important roles in the cultural inscription of conspicuous consumption on the female body.⁷³

Indeed, although medieval European sumptuary laws show substantial variation in their targets and objectives, most sumptuary historians agree that the shift in regulation to focus more on women's dress coincided with the growth of the urban mercantile class.⁷⁴ In England in particular, legislation of women's sartorial choices was tied closely to their subordinate cultural status. Following what Claire Sponsler has described as the imaginary patterns of social relations constructed by sumptuary laws, for instance, women's attire and consumption privileges were governed almost completely by the socio-economic status of their father or husband.⁷⁵ Related to this is the aforementioned matter of women's *paraphernalia* rights, which was the subject of an ongoing dispute starting in the mid-fourteenth century between the ecclesiastical and secular courts in England about whether a woman's clothing and jewelry were her very own (*sua propria*), or, like the rest of her land and goods, under the control of her husband. In Pollock and Maitland's words in their eminent *History of English Law*, the "idea that the ornaments of the wife's person are specially her own seems to struggle for recognition in England" in this period.⁷⁶ Control over the resources of a woman's appearance and self-presentation became central to late-medieval identity constructions, manifesting itself not only in sumptuary and property laws, but also in the performance of gender and marital subject positions. At its heart was a growing recognition among men that women could use the very material of masculine adornment to accrue their own material and symbolic capital; that is, that they could transform commodities to be their own and thus maneuver around the strategies of masculine disciplining forces.⁷⁷

Chaucer's Clerk situates the disparity between his *Tale* and *Envoy* precisely in this site of contention. As we remember, Griselda's marriage is based on her abdication of her right to choose: her choice is *not* to choose, her response is *not* to respond, and this lack of choice manifests itself in her vacillating sartorial *richesse* and *rudenesse*. In direct contrast to this, the Clerk positions the arch wives as rulers in the act of decision making: praising, albeit ironically, the women's "heigh prudence," and offering to "consaillie" the women's "governaille" (CT 4.1183, 1200, 1192). Underlying these general themes of marital and political control are further examples of a concerted focus on economic control over commodities and consumption. For example, when the Clerk tells the *noble wyves* that in order to take on themselves the "governaille," they must "evere answereth at the countretaille" (CT 4.1192, 1190), he alludes to wives' general garrulousness, but also to their consumer profligacy.⁷⁸ Literally the other half of a tally kept by the creditor and presented for payment, a countertally was often used as a pun that linked material and sexual debt, as in the *Shipman's Tale*, in which

a wife explains how she will pay her merchant husband for the debt she accrued with her new clothing (“I am youre wyf” she says, “score it upon my taille” [CT 7.416]). This pun also invokes a popular trope that portrays women as serpents or scorpions who flatter with their heads so that they can sting with their sexual and sartorial “tail,” a conceit that Chaucer elsewhere explicitly associates with the dangers of the “monstre” Fortune and her false goods.⁷⁹

This association of a wife’s defiant reply to her husband with monstrous consumer resistance was part of the larger moral discourse in which fashionable women were identified as an army whose newfangled garments became their armor against their husbands.⁸⁰ The Clerk taps into this discourse with his reference to *archewyves* who “stondeth at defense,” as “strong as is a greet camaille” (CT 4.1195–96). Here he appears to be using a pun on the word “camaille” as both the desert beast and a piece of knightly armor called a camel, thus implying that not only were these wives unnaturally strong in particularly alien ways, but that they were literally armored in response to the “housbonde armed . . . in maille” with which the word rhymes in the next stanza (CT 4.1202).⁸¹ These armored wives, moreover, use their “arwes of . . . crabbed eloquence” to pierce a husband’s “brest and eek his aventaille” (CT 4.1203, 1204). While the rhetoric of armored women or amazons that persisted as a popular image of female rebelliousness in late-medieval sermons and literature was in part informed by the ancient literary fascination with amazons, in the fourteenth century there were also new material considerations to bolster the association. As I discuss in my introduction, among the striking changes in attire in fourteenth-century Europe was a widespread shift toward a more militaristic appearance in both male and female dress, which not only imitated the cut-to-fit tailoring of knightly doublets or pourpoints, but also took on a distinctly armored aesthetic, with the surface of clothing, in Newton’s words, being “punctuated by decorative accents produced by pointed daggers, the sharp metal points of laces and conspicuous buckles.”⁸² In addition to fictional women such as the Wife of Bath, who famously wears a hat “[a]s brood as is a bokeler or a targe” and “spores sharpe” on her feet (CT 1.471, 473), in the fourteenth century there were well-known stories about contemporary women publicly donning male attire or knightly armor. Henry Knighton’s *Chronicon*, for example, describes the growing problem of large groups of women attending tournaments dressed in masculine attire, with daggers slung low on their hips.⁸³ Such stories have led at least one historian to surmise that discourses about women’s rebelliousness in attire might be indicative of a greater and recognized “feminist movement” in this period.⁸⁴

GRISELDA AS SUMPTUARY MODEL

The questions of materialism that develop in the *Clerk's Tale* and *Envoy*, and especially the sartorial particulars of these questions, leave us looking on some level for material interpreters. Chaucer offers two immediate examples in the Host and the Merchant, both of whom relate the tale, against the apparent directive of the Clerk, to their own wives.⁸⁵ Looking beyond the pilgrim audience, however, one can see that while Chaucer's Clerk addresses his own sumptuary reading of Griselda to contemporary "archewyves," it is another avid clerkly reader who responds. Several decades after Chaucer's death, John Lydgate invokes Griselda in two poems that explicitly address contemporary modes of consumption. One of a series of London poems that Lydgate wrote for Henry VI's court and other powerful laypeople in the late 1420s and early 1430s, his poem *Bycorne and Chychevache*, commissioned, according to John Shirley's rubrics, by a "werþy citeseyne of London" to be displayed on a painted or "desteyned" cloth and placed in a hall, chamber, or parlor, draws a clear connection between his text and that of the *Clerk's Tale*, mentioning Griselda twice in his brief (133-line) ballad and seeming consciously to echo the Clerk's language in several places.⁸⁶ Most strikingly, the poem's Clerk-like warning to women that Chichevache will "[y]ou . . . swalowe in hir entrayle" (77) was accompanied by a visual reminder of a woman stuck in the beast's maw; as Shirley writes in his rubrics to Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.20, "þen shal þer be a woman deuowred ypurtrayhed in þe mouþe of Chichevache cryen to alle wyves."⁸⁷

If Lydgate's use of Chaucer's Griselda in this poem roots itself in this absurdly literal form of consumption, repeatedly reminding the reader that Griselda was Chichevache's one and only meal, its larger intention seems to be to meditate on the potential of such frivolous fables of beastly hunger to reveal a deeper cultural significance about appetite. Lydgate grounds his poem in an apparently ironic but persistent parallel between the beast fable as a commentary on worldly, material appetite and as a commentary on spiritual bounty.⁸⁸ In a self-consciously sententious tone, his introductory stanza (with "an ymage in poete-wyse" accompanying it) not only asks his listeners to remember the story in their daily lives but also connects it to the larger cycle of life and death of which the quotidian is but a small part:

O prudent folkes, takeþe heed
 And remembreþe, in youre lyves,
 Howe þis story doþe proceed
 Of þe housbandes and þeyre wyves,

Of þeyre acorde and of þeyre stryves
 With lyf or deeþe, which to derrain
 Is graunted to þees beestis tweyin.
 (1–7)

With a clever use of enjambment between lines 5 and 6, Lydgate seems to play with the idea that this is not merely a light, humorous poem about husbands and wives and their alternate harmony or discord with *each other*; it is also a poem about their “acorde” and “stryves”—their reconciliation and conflict—with mortality, with “lyf or deeþe.” The vague use of a demonstrative to introduce the two animals—“þees beestis tweyin”—in the final line further emphasizes the possibility that the “beasts” in this poem, not clearly identified as Bicorn and Chichevache until the following stanza, could easily refer to the husbands and wives themselves.⁸⁹ Perhaps these creatures, then, like the “beste” and “vache” of Chaucer’s “Truth,” are merely metaphors for the mortal condition, the attachment to temporal goods in the face of the one Good.

Such “striving” with the daily vacillations of one’s immediate material circumstances as well as the more critical life cycles they invoke might be said to realize the conceptual playing ground of Chaucer’s *Griselda*. For arguably no medieval character exists whose costume changes—an inherently frivolous transformation, on the surface—became so legendary and illuminated in such a skillful, serious, and penetrating way the sinister ramifications of Fortune’s fluctuating wheel. Lydgate inherited the association between *Griselda* and Chichevache from Chaucer, and his poem carries a similar interest not only in exploring the boundaries of material appetite and transformation but also in exploring the Clerk’s particular problem of how one should speak about material desires without encouraging material indulgence. Lydgate makes clear his attempt to read decidedly secular material through a spiritual lens in the second stanza of his *Bycorne and Chychevache*, in which he tells his listeners:

Of Chichevache and of Bycorne
 Treteþe hooly þis matere,
 Whos story haþe taught vs here to-forne
 Howe þees beestis, boþe in feere,
 Haue þeyre pasture, as yee shal here,
 Of men and wymmen, in se[n]tence,
 Thorough souffraunce or thorughe inpacience.
 (8–14)

To speak of “hooly . . . matere” that has “taught vs”; of the corresponding “beestis” in their “pasture” (a term repeated four times in the poem); of men and women learning “in se[n]tence” and “[t]horugh souffraunce,” is undoubtedly, in Lydgate’s world as monk of Bury, to speak of the Christian experience. Lydgate uses the term “pasture” elsewhere, for example, to refer to Christ’s flocks as well as the spiritual sustenance he provides with the Eucharist.⁹⁰ More directly, the biblical text of Ezekiel relies on the metaphor of God’s flock and pasture to explain his renewed relationship with his scattered followers after the “shepherds of Israel,” the princes and secular leaders, “fed themselves” instead of his sheep; he states, “As the shepherd visiteth his flock in the day . . . I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures . . . and I will feed them in judgment” (34:12–16). A few verses later God explicitly speaks of his herd of followers in terms of their relative strength or weakness, girth or leanness: “I myself will judge between the fat cattle and the lean” (34:20).

The biblical references certainly exist, therefore, to introduce a possible religious subtext for Lydgate’s beasts. But this is far from spiritual allegory; Lydgate’s instruction that his listeners should “[t]retepe” the fable of Chichevache and Bicorn, with its contrary spouses, singing cows, and mock-moral warnings, as this kind of “hooly . . . matere,” is another subject altogether. While this type of inversion is certainly the domain of satire—the poem is still at its heart a beast fable that ridicules human failure—Lydgate’s preponderance of spiritual references at the head of the tale also seems to pose larger questions. What is “holy matter” after all, if not a didactic work on how to avoid a (or *the*) “Beast” bent on one’s destruction?⁹¹ If not an ostensibly “good” person literally or figuratively “consumed” by a monstrous appetite? The holy matter that needs interpreting here, in other words, is *matter* itself and how a good Christian (a patient Griselda) negotiates the innate human appetite that comes with a material body.

Much more than his precursor’s, Lydgate’s discussion of the beasts throughout the rest of his poem consists almost entirely of references to their quests for human fodder and their corresponding bodily appearance. Scarcely a single stanza (out of nineteen) fails to mention the food or the feeding of the beasts, or fails to contain words such as “foode,” “pasture,” “ete,” “vitayle,” “deuoure,” “swalowe,” or “feding.” In the few places where the poet puts aside the overtly alimentary to discuss bad women and their oppressed men more generally, his language and imagery still reflect what Freud would call ‘oral fixation’ in both its receptive and aggressive modes (clapping tongues; words and their relative forbearing or gainsaying, a woman who sings her ballad of warning while literally “in þe mouþe” of

Chichevache). The governing metaphor throughout is the trope of dearth and excess, famine and feast, and “lak or plente”:

For þis Bicorne of his nature
 Wil noon oþer maner foode
 But pacient men in his pasture;
 And Chichevache eteþe wymmen goode;
 And boope þeos beestes, by þe roode,
 Be fatte or leene, hit may not fayle,
 Lyke lak or plente of þeyre vitayle.
 (15–21)

“Lack” and “plenty” might be unstated moral keywords in Chaucer’s *Griselda*, but they were unambiguous moral keywords in the Middle Ages for a variety of social and cultural excesses, a subject that Lydgate, as a tireless champion of measure in all things (the poems “A Song of Just Mesure” and “Mesure is Tresour” are a mere sampling), touches upon often. The basic truth of *Bycorne and Chychevache* is that each beast lacks the necessary moderation; not only does each have an extremely restrictive diet for no apparent reason, but also one beast excessively fasts while the other excessively binges—practices, incidentally, expressly warned against in Lydgate’s well-known *Dietary*.⁹² This excess makes them both repulsive and attractive, both beastly and provocative—perfect fodder (so to speak) for the practiced “mesure” of Lydgate’s poetry.

Lydgate’s poem on the consuming beasts is the first extant poem to introduce Chichevache’s mate, Bicorn, or “two horns,” who shares a name with a distinctive piece of women’s fashions from Lydgate’s time: the horned head-dress, also known as “bicorne.”⁹³ Lydgate condemns these headdresses in “Dyte of Womenhis Hornys,” a poem that he addresses to “[n]oble prynces-sis” (41), and in which he uses very familiar language to implore women to “cast away” their unnatural attire:

Clerkys recorde, by gret auctoryte,
 Hornes wer yove to bestys ffor dyffence—
 A thyng contrarie to ffemynyte,
 To be maad sturdy of resystence.
 But arche wives, egre in ther vyolence,
 Fers as tygre ffor to make affray,
 They haue despit, and ageyne concyence,
 Lyst nat of pryde, ther hornes cast away.
 (33–40)⁹⁴

As this passage suggests, in this poem Lydgate effectively adopts the vocabulary of the Clerk's *Envoy* and the Wife of Bath's *Prologue* to explore the issue of women's sartorial extravagance. In addition to hailing clerkly "auctoryte," for example, Lydgate identifies "experyence" as the thing that proves beauty's prevailing value in the face of elaborate fashions (7–8), and describes nature as having "souereynte" over crafted appearance (2–3). As in the Clerk's *Envoy*, Lydgate's target appears to be the general population of "arche wives" that the Wife of Bath exemplifies; while Chaucer's Clerk states "Ye archewyves, stondeth at defense, / . . . egre as is a tygre yond in Ynde" (CT 4.1195, 1199), Lydgate likewise declares them to be "arche wives, egre in ther vyolence, / Fers as tygre ffor to make affray."

In addition to the overt linguistic borrowings from the *Envoy*, Lydgate invokes Griselda as the sartorial counterexample in various subtle ways. While Griselda remains "ay oon in herte and in visage" (CT 4.711) throughout all of Walter's attempts to "assaye" her constancy (CT 4, esp. 449–62), Lydgate decries the "counterfet" (22) aspects of contemporary women's attire, focusing on the "foreyn apparence" (2) of elaborate fashions and the accompanying implications of duplicity in the wearer. For example, like the attractive but impure gold alloy of the Clerk's contemporary women (CT 4.1167–69), Lydgate declares that in the world of fashion "[t]hyng counterfeet wol faylen at assay" (14). More specifically like the Clerk, Lydgate uses the metaphor of amalgamated gold to describe women's deceptive appearance, stating that "[t]rewe metall requeryth noon allay" (6). Generally speaking, Lydgate addresses the pretences of high fashion directly, pushing his sartorial metaphors further than Chaucer's Clerk, such as when he contrasts "pure" gold with the golden cloth that women wear: "Tween gold and gossomer is greet dyffrence" (5).⁵ In these ways Lydgate formulates a sartorial dialectic from the vocabulary of the *Clerk's Tale* and *Envoy*, and specifically from the contrasting attributes of the ostentatious Wife of Bath and naked Griselda: on the one hand are the "arche wives," whose "counterfeet" fashions ally them with "Crafft" (2), "richesse" (22), "dyffence," "vyolence," "resystence," and "thyng contrarie to ffemynyte," and on the other are the "wyves trewe" (29), whose "natural" kerchiefs characterize their associations with "Nature" (20), God-given "beute" (24), "prudence" (26), "humylyte" (49), "chast innocence" (28), and of course, "pacyence" (47). In the end, Lydgate summons this final and most famous attribute of Griselda to entreat women to strip themselves of their finery: "Vnder support of your pacyence," he pleads, "[y]eveth example hornes to cast away" (47–48).

In addressing women's horned headdresses, this poem tackles one of the most common and most dramatic examples of late-medieval women's fashion rebellion, and one that certainly would have informed the sartorial sub-

text of the Clerk's *Envoy* as well as that of Lydgate's poems. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century sermons and poems cite women's horned headdresses as the epitome of fashion's unnaturalness, violent disobedience, and ornamental extremes.⁹⁶ The homiletic tradition associates a woman wearing a horned headdress with the violent ox of Exodus 21:28–29, who kills innocent people when its master fails to restrain it, and contemporary poems picked up on the same theme.⁹⁷ According to the sermonizer John Bromyard (d. 1352), the way to counter this rebellion is to strip the women bald of their headdresses and other adornments in an Isaiah-like (and Walter-like) purging of prideful adornment.⁹⁸ The biblical passage to which Bromyard refers was a favorite of moralists in this period, and it revels in the endless possibilities of stripping away women's finery:

And the Lord said: Because the daughters of Sion are haughty, and have walked with stretched out necks, and wanton glances of their eyes, and made a noise as they walked with their feet and moved in a set pace. / The Lord will make bald the crown of the head of the daughters of Sion, and will discover their hair. / In that day the Lord will take away the ornaments of shoes, and little moons, / And chains and necklaces, and bracelets, and bonnets, / And bodkins, and ornaments of the legs, and tablets, and sweet balls, and earrings, / And rings, and jewels hanging on the forehead, / And changes of apparel, and short cloaks, and fine linen, and crisping pins, / And looking glasses, and lawns, and headbands, and fine veils. (Isaiah 3:16–24)

The allure of this biblical passage rests in the way it paradoxically animates the very ornaments it targets for removal, excessively listing and categorizing in the poetic realm the objects that are forbidden in the material one. In this way the passage enacts one of the inherent problems for medieval moralists writing about fashion and ornamentation, a problem, as I have discussed, with which Chaucer's Clerk seems intimately concerned. On the surface the Clerk's own antimaterialism is steeped in this particular moral discourse about material goods, which, like the satirical poem "Song Upon the Tailors" in my previous chapter, targets the disparity between the spiritual abjection such goods expose and the cultural capital they bestow. As I have argued, however, even as the Clerk dismisses the frivolity of materialistic, bourgeois consumers in his dress and in his rhetoric, his extreme asceticism suggests an apprehension about and a fascination with their worldly, material aesthetics: his sartorial dialectic between *richesse* and *rudenesse*, his link between Griselda's sartorial transformations and the worldly, changing "peple" around her,

and his final address to the consuming *archevyves* of the world, all suggest a suppressed interest in the matter of changing fashions and in the people who wear them. Lydgate's subsequent incorporation of the Clerk's *Tale* and *Envoy* into the fashion debates in his own culture indicates the widespread effectiveness of Chaucer's sumptuary discourses, but it also attests to the moralized and popularized appeal among late-medieval English poets for women to 'cast away' their finery, and to the corresponding attractiveness of the figure of Griselda as a contemporary model for that appeal.

FIVE

*English Galaunts
and the Aesthetic Event*



Ye prowde galonttes hertlesse,
With your hygge cappis witlesse,
And youre schort gownys thriftlesse,
Have brought this londe in gret hevynesse.

—“Proud Gallants and Popeholys Priests”¹

Huff! A galawnt, vylabel [*vive la bel*]
Thus syngyth galawntys in here revel.

—“Huff! A Galaunt”²

Lesser-known precursor to the fop and the dandy, the English galaunt (galant), or “man of fashion,” is perhaps best known as a socioliterary type in early modern English drama.³ Scholars of this period have pointed out the important role that the early modern gallant plays in processes and notions of both social and theatrical performance, outlining the ways in which these ever-stylish theater-going, tavern-haunting, attention-seeking, moneyless young Englishmen became associated with dramatic players, theatrical presentations, and the process of playwriting itself in this period.⁴ The impressive list of early modern playwrights who wrote about gallants—which includes Shakespeare, Marlowe, Middleton, Dekker, Marston, and Jonson, as well as anonymous authors of several morality plays—has tended to obscure the presence of this figure in other genres, cultural arenas, and time periods, however. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, the primary characteristics of the English galaunt as a literary type crystallized for writers long before its association with drama

or the early modern stage. As the consummate figure of sartorial imitation and changeability in a society that was in the process of shaping a national social identity largely according to the same terms, the fashionable galaunt was a compelling topic for late-medieval English writers, who used the figure to confront and organize questions about, among other things, the creative energies expressed by ever-changing fashions, about English *varietas vestium* as a national style, and about the connection between emerging literary and vestimentary aesthetics.

The cultural valence of the English galaunt as a late-medieval topic of interest can be seen in the extensive and diverse body of literature that touches on the subject in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which includes poems, ballads, lyrics, chronicles, sermons, conduct manuals and other didactic literature, as well as the dramas that precede the early modern association of galaunts with thespian players. The most common characteristic attributed to these figures is their capacity for stylistic change, and in particular their ability to aestheticize change through various forms of sartorial vacillation. Most often described as “fresshe” or “newe,” galaunts are said not only to change their outfits frequently but also to wear forms of clothing that stage their own stylistic mutability in the changing shapes of doublets, sleeves, hose, codpieces, and shoes or through their hybridized and pluralized colors, ornaments, fabrics, and fillers. The personal characteristics of galaunts further embody changefulness: gamblers by nature, they are described as penniless, wandering revelers who regularly overindulge in decadent drink, food, and entertainment. The radically aestheticized worldview presented by these figures is exemplified by their Frenchified public slogan, *vive la bel* [long live beauty], as well as by their highly stylized forms of speech or song, poetic forms such as macaronic and doggerel verse, acrostics, ballads, and carols.

Following the argumentative thread of my previous chapters, I am most interested in examining the literary galaunt’s potential as a fulcrum for late-medieval English responses to aesthetic changes in their culture and to the related notion of worldly transience more broadly. That is, although this figure is often comical, I would like to read the trope of the late-medieval English galaunt for the serious cultural work it accomplishes, work that in many ways complements, for example, that of Griselda in the same periods of English literary history. Whereas, as I discuss in the previous chapter, Griselda proved helpful to late-medieval writers as an example of stoic steadfastness in the face of material abundance and fluctuation, the galaunt represents the Englishman who changes with every new whim that fashion dictates. Whereas the Clerkly narrator of Chaucer’s tale overtly shuns liter-

ary ornament, the poems on the galaunt that I will examine in this chapter revel in the creative pleasures of ornamental poetics. Both Griselda and the galaunt are repeatedly imagined by poets as victims on Fortune's wheel; yet while Griselda confronts the experience of material changeability with unmoving patience and resistance, the galaunt, as a more overtly satirical figure, embraces worldly change as a source of power and happiness. Griselda and the galaunt are both extreme exemplars of the manner in which a late-medieval individual might respond to worldly fluctuations and to the fashions that came to represent those fluctuations, and each also represents the importance of clothing as a tool for medieval writers who wished to explore more generally the allure of aesthetic novelty.

As the diverging tones of this chapter's two epigraphs suggest—one denoting the onerous “hevynesse” brought about by the galaunts, the other, their lighthearted festiveness—late-medieval literary portrayals of galaunts tended to vacillate between typecasting these figures of fashion as nation-destroying degenerates or as superficial lyric diversions.⁵ In the two poems that I will analyze most comprehensively in this chapter, these stereotypical aspects of the literary galaunt work together in a dialectic relationship that aggressively interrogates the larger cultural phenomenon of aesthetic changeability. As I will discuss, the meaning of these poems rests in the opposition between gravity and frivolity; the frivolity of the galaunts' ever-changing fashions and playful lifestyle is cast in opposition to the grave incidents of military insurgency and national misfortune that they are said to incite. Each poem presents the galaunts' radical aesthetic as a visual event tied to a moment of military and social crisis: one on the eve of the Uprising of 1381 and another in the context of the equally fractious Jack Cade revolt of 1450.⁶ While these poems single out contemporary insurgents as the originators of the galaunts' startling appearance—the earlier poem targets liveried retainers, while the later poem points to those English soldiers who have recently returned from final defeat in France—they also effectively offset their moral concerns about England's new galaunt aesthetic with poetic experiments that themselves mimic galaunt stylistic elements. Underscoring these poets' interests in the aesthetic value of galaunts' changeable, diversified style are suggestions that the galaunt is a trope that refigures the contemporary English experience of cultural and linguistic polyvalency: whether presented as a hybrid appropriation of French style, as a touchstone of English *varietas vestium*, or as the fulfillment of a recurring prophecy that links their changing fashions to England's own fragmented linguistic history, the galaunt of these poems seems inherently to personify the late-medieval English aesthetic experience.⁷

Charles Baudelaire described the later dandy as a figure who emerges in societies in transition and whose aesthetic power resides in part in his ability to traverse, through his singular attention to mannered form, temporal and cultural upheavals.⁸ The medieval English galaunt functions as such a crossover figure, not merely because he is presented as emerging and thriving in particular moments of social, political, and economic upheaval, but also because his embodiment of these moments engages in myriad ways the notion of cultural translocation itself. Most often the fashionable galaunt was presented in the context of his ability to disrupt social hierarchy and social ordering. One late text overtly concerned with galaunt aesthetics, Peter Idley's fifteenth-century conduct manual *Instructions to His Son*, echoes earlier chroniclers, sermonizers, and poets alike in its description of the leveling impact that contemporary fashions have on English social status: "A man shall not now kenne a knave from a knyght," Idley says, in an oft-quoted phrase, "ffor al be like in clothynge and array."⁹ The galaunt is a social and literary type, therefore, that is grounded in its ability to undermine not merely the social order but also the *practice* of social typing. A type that explodes types, the galaunt's mutable aesthetic creates, through social chaos, hermeneutic confusion, asking how one is supposed to understand one's surroundings, or one's place in the world, without relying on the signs usually offered by conventional clothing and consumption patterns. Like the modern cross-dresser discussed by Marjory Garber, the galaunt signals "not just another category crisis, but—much more disquietingly—a crisis of 'category,' itself."¹⁰

As we will see, this epistemological crisis rests not only in the novel appearance of the galaunts' clothes but also in the unconventional way that clothes themselves are used by galaunts. Like the sudden change in functionality that, according to Bill Brown, signals the *thingness* of an object, clothing is worn by galaunts in a way that changes its purpose and meaning: that draws attention to the stylized garments themselves, rather than to their mundane former function as signifiers of social status. Each corresponding aspect of the late-medieval galaunt, from his deprivileging of the social as a category of analysis to his professed love of beauty, confirms his production of an aesthetic that explicitly stages itself as a primary experiential event, a mode of calling attention to stylistic variability as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end.

To conclude my reading of the galaunt's process of aesthetic reorientation, in the final section of this chapter I will suggest a way to understand the galaunt's ethos of changeability—his performance of mutable appearance and social status at historical moments of rupture—as a form of aesthetic playfulness. The English word *galaunt* comes from the Old French

word *galer*, meaning to play or to amuse oneself, and I would argue that the galaunt's ethos of playfulness sets him apart from other vice-ridden social types in this period.¹¹ Reading the poeticized English galaunt through his characteristic role as a dicer and game player, I propose, reveals a figure whose aestheticized lifestyle follows the rhythmical lyric patterns of what Johan Huizinga termed cultural play. In the context of his own games of chance, the galaunt's often lively association with Fortune's wheel seeks to reframe the experience of material changeability—and especially the vestimentary dispossession for which Fortune is most known—as a form of cultural movement and play. At the same time, his corresponding association with stylized poetics suggests the extent to which the galaunt's experimental forms represent a phenomenologically significant lyric sensibility, within which the practice of poetic style might be experienced and understood in material terms.

JACKS AND *JACQUERIE*:

A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY GALAUNT POEM

In the second decade of the fifteenth century the English scribe John Shirley jotted down a recipe “For to make fine stuffe proved for jakke or doublet of defence” on the first folio of his first major manuscript anthology, now known as British Library, MS Additional 16165.¹² As a long-time member of the retinue of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and with substantial service in France, Shirley would have experienced the jack both as a military and social imperative and as a culture-crossing artifact.¹³ Stuffed jacks and doublets were crucial garments in both military and social spheres in Shirley's period, descended from aesthetically similar garments at the heart of the “revolution” of dress in the mid-fourteenth century: both were short, fitted male jackets padded either for defense or for fashion that were worn, with military and stylistic modifications, well into later centuries. The histories of these garments are decidedly different, however. The well-known doublet (so-called for its double layer) began as a padded undergarment worn by knights beneath their hauberk, eventually coming to be worn on its own as an outer garment by the elite classes and then the middling and lower classes, becoming, along with male hose, the ultimate symbol of the new fashions worn in this period, and for some critics, the symbol of the beginning of fashion as a concept.¹⁴ The jack, on the other hand, appears to be one of the few fashions that rose from below in the late-medieval period.¹⁵ First associated with French peasants and artisans—historians connect the French jack to

the term *Jacquerie* used for the peasant revolt of 1358 after the French lost at Poitiers—this layered jacket came to be used as the central military attire of English foot soldiers, and was eventually worn by all classes, including English gentry and kings.¹⁶

As an enthusiastic supporter of vernacular English lyric and a wearer of English jacks, Shirley represents the ideal reader to appreciate the crucial role that the jack plays in a poem that has been cited as housing the earliest extant reference to the English galaunt and that exists in three mid-fifteenth-century manuscripts from his era. This anonymous, 236-line bilingual complaint lyric begins “Syng I wolde, butt alas!” and was generically titled “On the Times” by its original editor, Thomas Wright. Written in alternating, rhyming lines of English and Latin, this poem represents the galaunt as a largely home-grown character of divisiveness and disorder who emerges at the most critical moment of cultural discord in England’s history. Richard Firth Green has dated the poem to the autumn of 1380, early in Richard II’s rule and mere months before the most dramatic political event of late-medieval England, the Uprising in June of 1381.¹⁷

“On the Times” situates its grievances against galaunts within a larger dialogue about England’s fallen reputation in the eyes of the world, and about accelerating foreign violence: those who once feared England now attack it (25–28), and “many a thowsand” enemies outside the realm are said to “*nos per rus per mare querunt*” [*seek us out through the countryside and the sea*] (27–28). But while the poem presents itself as a veritable call to arms, exclaiming “Ynglond, awake now— / *consurgunt jugiter hostes*” [England, awake now— / *our enemies jointly arise*] (37–38), the vast majority of its complaints address internal, not external division. “Loo! Withyn oure lond,” says the poet mournfully, “*insurgunt undeque guerre*” [*Wars rise up everywhere*] (21–22). The metaphor of England’s internal war is sustained throughout most of the poem. In the world-upside-down section that opens the poem, for example, profligacy accounts for much of this cultural disorder: the poet equally derides desire for profit (20), wealthy merrymakers (41), “[u]nthryft” in entertainment and bodily desires (55–58), straightforward gluttony of “Gentyles, gromes, and boyse” alike (59), and the general habits of manner and consumption that blur social hierarchies—“Sugget and suffrayn / *uno quasi fune trahuntur*” [Subject and sovereign / *are drawn as if with a single line*] (61–62). As the poem progresses, the jumble of complaints is distilled into three main categories of domestic divisiveness: roughly sixty lines are devoted to the corruption of secular law and Richard II’s faulty rule, thirty lines to avarice in the Church, and ninety lines—by far the longest section—to the vices of the fashionable galaunt.

The long description of galaunts in this poem is introduced by way of an obscure passage that puns mercilessly on the many meanings of the aforementioned jack. The extended quotation reveals well the startling visual and aural disjunction of the poem's bilingual metrical scheme:

Now without a jak
paucos timuit remanere;
 Sum have hym on his bak,
sed bursa mallet habere.
 Goode Jak, where is John?
ubi gratia nunc requiescit?
 Jak, now grace ys gone;
ad regna remota recessit.
 Jak nobil with hym ys;
iter simul accipuerunt.
 Of bothe ys grete mys;
illos multi modo querunt.
 Galauntes, Purs Penyles—
per vicos ecce vagantur.
 (105–18)

[Now without a jack [quilted jacket/coin] / *it frightens few to remain;* / Some have him [the jacket/coin] on his back, / *but would prefer to have him in their purses.* / Good Jack, where is John? / *Where does his grace now lie at rest?* / Jack, now grace is gone; / *he has gone off to distant realms.* / Jack noble [a coin] is with him; / *they've gone on a journey together.* / Both are greatly missed; / *many now seek them.* / Galaunts, Purse Penniless— / *behold, they wander through the countryside.*]

At the heart of this passage is a play on the jack's vestimentary role: as a garment ostensibly meant for defense, the jack's might also be seen, in a different way, to protect those people ostensibly "frightened" by the violent excesses of court culture. Yet, following as they do a discussion about the king's (Richard II's) ineffectual rule of law, his placating councilors (the king was still 14 years old), and various "payntyt sleeves" (85), or liveried retainers, who oppress and corrupt the legal system, the first lines here about the cultural capital of the jack also speak to the culture of favoritism—and especially retinues marked by special attire or livery—that would come to characterize Richard's court.¹⁸ That the poem overall addresses the king's lack of self-rule is clearly evidenced by its final Latin postscript, which reads "O rex, si rex es,

rege te, et eris sine re rex / Nomen habes sine re, te nisi recte regas" [O king, if you are king, rule yourself, and you will be a king though you have nothing. / You have the name without the thing, unless you, king, rightly rule yourself].¹⁹

More specific associations with the names "Jak" and "John" in these verses have been proposed by Green in his dating of the poem. "Jak," he points out, is most likely a reference to John Philipot, prosperous citizen and former mayor of London. Philipot donated ships and armor to the soldiers of Gaunt's youngest brother, Thomas of Woodstock, for an expedition against the French in the summer of 1380 and most likely expected some form of reimbursement from Gaunt, who was subsequently away on an expedition to the border of Scotland in the fall of 1380.²⁰ According to Thomas Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana* (c. 1400), "jakke" was the specific name used for the jackets that Philipot lent to Woodstock's men after the men, clearly underpaid, pawned their own armor for food before the expedition.²¹

Considering the time of this poem's writing, the association of the name "Jak" with commoners is especially evocative.²² "Jak" being deserted by "John" could be a reference not only to *one* "commoner," Philipot, but to commoners in general who have been abandoned by the ruling faction; as the poet states elsewhere, "the ryche maketh myry, / *sed vulgus collacrematur*" [the rich make merry, / *but the common people weep*] (41–42). This reading is also suggested by the poet's earlier inclusion of the fable of the cat on whom no one dares to tie a bell (99–100), well-known from its use a year or so earlier in Langland's *Piers Plowman* (B-Text), where the cat most likely refers to John of Gaunt.²³ The "jak" also possibly represents a coin—"Jak noble," the poet quips, is with John on his journey—and hence the poet's reference to those who have "Jak" (the jacket) on their back, but would rather have him (the coin) in their purses (105–6).²⁴ As Green points out, having "jak" on your back might also be an allusion to the poll taxes of 1380–81, the third such tax, and one which increased the dislike of Gaunt, as its expense was in part due to the failure of his and his men's excursions against the French.²⁵ This tax was, moreover, the main impetus for the Uprising later that year, during which the rebels who broke into Gaunt's palace the Savoy were said to have left arrows in his own "jakke," as well as turning his coat of arms over as a sign of treason, before burning the palace down.²⁶ In its connection between jacks and groups of restless, violent Englishmen fresh from the war, "On the Times" seems inherently to associate Englishmen's jacks with the violent French *Jacquerie* of 1358.

When the "Galauntes, Purs Penyles" are finally introduced at line 117 in this poem, therefore, it is within the local context of Richard's courtly favor-

ites and lack of self-rule, of Gaunt's military excursions and the wealthy London businessmen who support them, and of the unpaid and unruly young retainers caught in the middle. It is also within the context of a garment that stretches to symbolize all these things—as well as symbolizing the English aristocratic appropriation of both French fashions and commoners' attire at a moment when power relations in both of those arenas had begun to tip against the English aristocrats. The galaunts are first imagined as wandering destructively through the countryside, very much like the unnamed but clearly French enemy in the opening of the poem (28, 117).²⁷ They borrow without repaying and gain in violence as they gather together, each "busy to commit war" [*satagit committere guerram*] (122). Impulsive and unpredictable, they are literally here one minute and gone the next, ravaging the land, says the poet, like a foreigner: "Now ys he here, now is he gone / *destruxit ut advena terram*" (123–24). These descriptions quickly give way to lengthy explanations of the galaunts' fashions, which change like the wind: "Now schort and now longe, / *ventus velud ecce vacillant*" [Now short and now long / Behold, just as the wind they vary] (167–68). The offensive changeability of the galaunts' attire is equaled only by their deceptive and deforming powers of alteration, which are said to deny God's superior powers of fashioning, a meaning nicely underscored by the tension between the alternating lines of Middle English and Latin:

Freshest of the new towche,
incedunt ridiculose,
 Lytel or noght in the powche,
pascuntur deliciose.
 Brodder then ever God made
humeris sunt arte tumentes;
 Narow thay bene, thay seme brod,
nova sunt haec respice gentes
 They bere a newe facoun,
humeris in pectore tergo;
 Goddes plasmacoun
non illis complacet ergo.
 (125–36)

[Freshest of the new fashion, / *they strut ridiculously*; / Little or nothing in the purse, / *they dine deliciously*. / Broader than ever God made / *they swell out at the shoulders*; / Narrow [though] they are, they seem broad / *Look! These are a "new fashion" of gents* / They bear a new fashion / *with shoul-*

ders in the back of the chest; / God's shaping of them / therefore is not pleasing to them.]

Manipulated by the very “stuff” of which Shirley later speaks, these clothes are said not only to create unnatural girth, making skinny men broad, but also to reshape and distort the human body altogether, creating lumps where they shouldn't be—on men's backs. Like other poems on the galaunt, this poem takes up the subject of “new fashion” (133) as troubling evidence of personal changeability in the face of higher forms of order.

As the poem progresses, the galaunts' extreme disorder takes on a more recognizable form; this group of Englishmen at metaphorical war with England perform the antitype of the order of chivalry. Like an ideal chivalric knight, they have broad shoulders, large chests, and wide necks, if only in appearance; they are armored with long spurs on their heels and strong, sharp “poyntes” on their toes, although they are only for show and their owners cherish them indulgently (141–42). Their hose are problematic specifically because the galaunts cannot, without damaging them, properly kneel to pray or pay homage (147–58), a gesture obviously fundamental to feudal relations; rather, they stand “in a workaday manner” (156), bringing confusion to those around them (158). This type of mimicking and undoing of the proper elements of knighthood is also suggested by the most recurrent expression used to describe the galaunts in this poem, that they are “newe.” These galaunts in their “newe facoun” mock the entire idea of the new life of the knight, the *nouvelle vie* described by poets such as Eustache Deschamps in his popular ballad “Du Bachelier d'Armes” [The Bachelor at Arms].²⁸ Literal and metaphorical renewal was made explicit in the initiation rituals of all knights, who were made anew with new garments and the girding of the sword in enactment of the Christian mystery of renovation, to “put off the old man, and put on the new man” in the words of Ephesians 4:22–23.²⁹ Last, like any good chivalric hero, the galaunt in this poem has a war cry, one he declares as he kisses his lady friends, as he drinks fragrant wines to excess, and as he demands, with implied violence, artful entertainment. Yet the slogan “Vye velabel” [*vive la bele*; long live beauty] (189) does not refer to his prowess or his sword, like standard war cries, but rather to his self-identified love of beauty. This mock-order of knights initiates followers by inculcating in them certain aesthetic tastes; a cultural war based on codes of consumption, rather than codes of chivalry. If the ideal knight was meant to keep order through military force and personal restraint, then the galaunt means to breed disorder through social violence, aesthetic disruption, and personal devotion to pleasure.

The slogan “vive la bele” that emerges in relation to galaunts in “On the Times” and that reappears in the later lyrics (usually as the neologism *vyla-bele*), and the ideals of beauty and pleasure that it implies, might seem more appropriate to the Aesthetic movement of the nineteenth century than to the aesthetic sensibilities of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. In fact the philosophical tenets of classical Epicureanism have been shown to have existed in late-medieval Europe; Paul A. Olson, for example, has suggested that the Wife of Bath’s famous “sect” of followers were in fact epicurean radicals.³⁰ Yet, as Umberto Eco pointed out years ago and as Maura Nolan has more recently discussed, the value of aesthetic pleasure—and especially the idea of transcendental beauty—was also fundamental to the medieval belief system.³¹ One of the few Platonic texts available to medieval readers was Plato’s *Timaeus*, which, through Chalcidius’s Commentary (fourth century) and Boethius’s famous meter “O qui perpetua” (Book III.m.9), impressed upon medieval sensibilities the way in which the visual splendor of the world reflects the ideal beauty of the Good. In Boethius’s words, “pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse / mundum mente gerens similique in imagine formans / perfectasque iubens perfectum absoluere partes” [You who are most beautiful produce the beautiful world from your divine mind and, forming it in your image, You order the perfect parts in a perfect whole] (III.m.9:7–9).³²

The galaunt’s embrace of aesthetic pleasure in “On the Times” seems more closely linked to the former, epicurean appreciation of beauty than to the latter, transcendental version. The slogan *vive la bele* itself accentuates the phenomenology of beauty, inherently requiring that one consider beauty in terms of lived—*vivre*, to live—experience. The galaunt signifies our own experience of enjoyment in a variety of ways, embodying and even aestheticizing excessive appetite for material pleasures while at the same time providing untold entertainment for the medieval poet, reader, and cultural observer in the witty retelling of his stylish exploits. The galaunt desires novelties and he *is* a novelty; his much-maligned cult of imitation exemplifies the “phenomenon of unceasing begetting,” or the impulse of replication that Elaine Scarry has described as characterizing the cultural practice of beauty.³³ Yet the trope of the galaunt also clearly requires contemplation of the larger role that transient material goods play in epistemologies of mortal experience. As I will discuss at more length below, the galaunt is often presented as the lavishly dressed victim perched precariously atop Fortune’s wheel; at the same time that he is satirized as a figure of mirth, therefore, he also inherently presents a warning about mortal attachment to goods and quite possibly, following my argument in chapter 1, a Boethian demonstration of the transcendent knowledge that *losing* material goods can bestow.³⁴ Scarry’s contention

that the experience of beauty is inseparable from the “experience of ‘being in error’” can be seen quite literally in this capacity of the galaunt to aesthetically forecast his own misfortune.³⁵

The impending fall of the galaunt is often demonstrated through a particular prophecy linked to his existence. Written on the cusp of the Uprising as it apparently was, the prophecy in “On the Times” sounds especially pointed and threatening:

With wyde koleres and hye,
gladio sunt colla parata,
 War ye the profycy
contra tales recitata.
 (137–40)

[With wide collars and high, / *their necks are prepared for the sword*, / Beware of the prophecy / *spoken against such men*.]

There are two possible sources for the prophecy alluded to here, one in Ranulph Higden’s popular chronicle of English history, the *Polychronicon* (1330s–40s), a source that was used more clearly by later galaunt poems, as I will discuss below, and that Andrew Galloway has recently argued was responsible for much of the discourse of *varietas vestium* in late-medieval English chronicles.³⁶ The poet could also be referring to a popular song later recorded in the *Brut* chronicle (c. 1400) that ties the worthlessness and downfall of Englishmen to their own stylized appearance. The *Brut* version reads:

Longe berde hertles,
 peyntede Hode witles,
 Gay cote graceles,
 makeþ Englsshman þrifles.³⁷

The *Brut* chronicler adds historical context to these lines, locating their creation in the skirmishes between the Scots and English in the early fourteenth century, and specifically claiming that in 1337 the Scots, mocking both the resources and the appearance of the English, pinned the verses to the doors of St. Peter’s Church in Stonegate, York. Forms of this well-known quatrain, like the similar prophesy by Higden, were drawn on by sermonizers as well as by poets in late-medieval England, and as Wendy Scase has discussed, were eventually co-opted for more pointed association with galaunts in the late-fifteenth-century poem “Proud Gallants and Popeholy Priests.”³⁸

The galaunts' prophecy is interesting less for what the prophecy forecasts—apocalyptic ruin was a frequent element of late-medieval complaint lyrics—than for its heightening of the galaunts' symbolic significance. “War ye the profycy / *contra tales recitata*”: the poet does not repeat the details of the prophecy, but rather assumes that most readers already know it well, and in this way suggests the extent to which the galaunts have become mythologized as a particular part of England's fated history. More specifically, what is mythologized is their stylized aesthetic, which in this poem takes the form of a political event equivalent to political and juridical corruption. In the same way that the galaunt's garments manifest the tension between past and present vestimentary styles, so his present appearance troubles both his own future and England's future. At the same time, however, like all prophecies, this one is grounded in an inherent curiosity about divine mysteries—in this case juxtaposing the fleeting demonstration of the galaunt's self-fashioning with the unmoving providential order of divine design. On the one hand the existence of the prophecy amplifies the intensity of the sociocultural danger associated with the galaunt, and on the other it increases the galaunts' impression of ephemeral mysteriousness, in effect accentuating the inherently fleeting and enigmatic nature of vestimentary change itself.

In choosing a highly mannered and somewhat overly complex poetic form for discussing the topic of the galaunt, the poet of “On the Times” poetically engages some of the same questions that his poem attends to in its thematic developments. The system of alternating Middle English and Latin half-lines mirrors not only the cultural turmoil that the poem describes and the fluctuating circumstances of the galaunts themselves, but also the aesthetic irresolution for which the galaunts are most known. A prime example are the first lines of the poem, which reinforce the aesthetic effects of the changeable form by complaining about the change—that is, the recent downturn—of England's fortunes:

Syng I wolde, butt alas!
decidunt prospera grata.
 Ynglond sum tyme was
regnorum gemma vocata,
 Of manhood the flowre,
ibi quondam floruit omnis;
 Now gone ys that oure—
traduntur talia sompnis.
 (1–8)

[Sing I would, but alas! / *Good times are fading away.* / England once was
/ *called the jewel of nations,* / the flower of manhood, / *where once all flour-*
ished; / Now that hour is gone— / *such things are fading into dreams.*]

In addition to their alternating rhythmical effect, the aesthetic impact of these lines and those throughout the poem is to reinforce the fragmented and changeable vestimentary style worn by the galaunts. Like the fashionable figures lamented in this poem, the sense of an aesthetic whole is thwarted by the text's multiple fluctuating idioms, rhythms, and rhymes. Likewise, one might say that the excessively mannered artifice of the poem illuminates certain tensions and provocations inherent in the formation of poetic style itself, complicating the hermeneutic codes prioritized by a reader's reading practices. Whether one is meant to read the poem for narrative sense, for aural rhythm, or for visual continuity; whether the poetic structure invokes order or disorder: such questions move from background to foreground as the poem's formal stylistic choices take over as one of its dominant topics.

Accompanying the poem's heightened, almost *experiential* expression of the connection between poetic subject and poetic form are more overt references to poetry-making as well. Like the later poem I will discuss in the next section, "On the Times" expressly links its own poetic performance with that of the galaunt. Whereas the first line of the poem speaks of the poet's "singing" as having been dampened by England's misfortunes—misfortunes, we subsequently learn, caused in large part by galauntise—the end of the poem suggests a more direct connection between that act of singing and the unruly galaunts. The poet singles out one singer (himself, one imagines) who complies with the galaunts' impetuous demands for entertainment: "A countur-tenore, / *canabit carcere clausus*" [a countertenor / *shut up in a prison will sing*] (207–8). In further proof that this lyricist is meant to be understood as the poet himself, singing his poem at the insistence of the galaunts about which he writes, we are told that he decides to sing "[o]f the *cherche*" (209) just as the poem itself turns its final attentions to the same subject.

The poet's metatextual concerns are further revealed in an epigraph suggesting that the poem's unruly verse form is superseded by the unruliness of the English language itself: "Hec quicumque legat / non dampnet metra que pegi / Anglica lingua negat / semet subdere legi" [Whoever may read these things / let him not condemn the meters I have fashioned; / the English language refuses / to submit itself to any law].³⁹ Wrangling the subject of the disorderly galaunt into bilingual couplets is difficult enough, we are to

understand, without the added challenge of wrangling the lawless English language into verse. Adding these lines to the preceding poem helps to make more overt the value of the galaunt as a trope for exploring changes in literary aesthetic practices as well as in cultural aesthetics more broadly—English *stylus* as a manifestation of English *style*—and also suggests that this trope may have been privileged as a deliberate choice by fourteenth-century poets wanting to experiment with the English vernacular as a new poetic medium. This interest in the excessively varied style of the galaunt as a figure for the aggregated aspect of English lyric style develops more fully in the fifteenth-century galaunt poem that will be the focus of my next section.

“FURRED WITH NON SEQUITUR”:
THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY *TREATISE OF A GALAUNT*

The manuscript history of “On the Times” suggests not only that the poem had relevance to the period leading up to the Uprising of 1381 to which its writing has been dated, but also that it enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in the mid-fifteenth century, the period to which its three manuscript copies have been dated, as I mention above. The poem’s complaints about galaunts likely carried analogous political implications in the later period, as jacks, the garments at the center of the satire in “On the Times,” were also commonly worn by English militia in the fifteenth century and may have been associated with the rebels of the Jack Cade revolt in 1450 as well as those of the earlier Uprising.⁴⁰

That galaunts in general were associated with the Jack Cade rebels can be discerned by their treatment in a sermon given at Saint Paul’s Cross in the last decade of the fifteenth century by Bishop of Ely, John Alcock. At the end of his sermon on pride Alcock recollects a poem from his childhood, “a treatyse callyd Galand,” that he invokes both for its wisdom about galaunts and for its authority as a poem written by esteemed poet and monk of Bury, John Lydgate:

frendes I remember dayes here before in my yougthe. y^t there was a vertuous monke of Bury callyd Lydgate. whiche wrote many noble histories. & made many vertuous balettes to the encrease of vertue. & oppression of vyce. And amonge other he made a treatyse callyd Galand. & all the kindred of Galand he discryued therin I suppose if galantes vnderstode the progeny. they wold refuse to be of y^t felyshyp & kyndrede.⁴¹

Lydgate's authorship of the galaunt poem is crucial to Alcock, whose apparent nostalgia for the moral clarity of his childhood seems to coincide with his nostalgia for a poet of Lydgate's stature who could, with his verse, effect "the increase of virtue and oppression of vice." This passage expresses a similar conviction regarding the efficacy of Lydgate's poetry in its apparent hope that in resurrecting this poem about the galaunts' ignoble origins he will, with the late poet's help, compel contemporary galaunts to turn away from the reprehensible practice itself. In his subsequent description he merges the literary origins of Lydgate's poem (here called a book) with the political origins of the galaunts themselves:

The occasion of makynge this boke was whan englysshe men were bet out
& [had] loste fraunce. Gasgoyne. Gyon. & came home disguysed in theyr
garmentes in every parte of theyr bodyes. whiche englyssh men sawe never
before. and many folowed the lewde & abhomynable garmentes . . . and in
short season after were grete surrections & murdre of lords & others as I
doubte not many that lyuethe can remember it.

In these lines Alcock situates the emergence of the galaunt aesthetic in the final English defeat and exile from France in 1449–50 at the end of the Hundred Years War and also in the Jack Cade rebellion shortly thereafter, which, as legend tells it, included some of the returning English troops.⁴² This searing indictment of the galaunt as a figure produced and branded by English military defeat, retreat, and domestic rebellion is clearly mediated, however, by Alcock's somewhat romantic view of the galaunt's role in England's literary history. If Lydgate indeed wrote the poem invoked here, a claim that has since been disputed, then it would have been one of his last, since he died in 1451, shortly after the history described here.⁴³ To Alcock, however, the galaunt represents an aesthetic event in England's recent history worthy of both a bishop's and a poet laureate's attention, a hybridized figure—English inside, French outside—whose sudden appearance seduced an entire population with fashions that "englyssh men sawe neuer befor" and caused social unrest so violent that it has been seared into England's cultural memory as well as copied into its books.

The poem *Treatise of a Galaunt*, about which Alcock reminisces, characterizes its galaunts in a similar light. Made up of roughly 32 seven-line stanzas, the poem is the longest and most concentrated medieval treatment of the English galaunt, and also appears to have been the most popular, surviving in three extant manuscripts from the second half or third quarter of

the fifteenth century and in four printed editions associated with Wynkyn de Worde in the first decades of the sixteenth century.⁴⁴ Like “On the Times,” the *Treatise* connects the galaunt’s historical appearance with many types of cultural change, starting with the deterioration of England’s overall prosperity, reputation, and happiness:

Ryght late stode our lande in suche prosperyte
 Of chyualry / manhode / and ryche marchaundyse
 Thrughe all crysten royalmes / sprange our felycyte.
 Of grete welthe and prowesse / in sondry wyse
 Our sadnes is chaunged the [*sic*] / for [*sic*] newe guyse
 We haue exyled our welthe / I note where
 England may wayle / that euer it came here.
 (15–21)⁴⁵

As this passage suggests, the myriad ways in which the old values of England have been “chaunged” for new fashions, or “newe guyse,” constitutes the main theme of the poem. Like the earlier poem, the general downturn of England’s fortunes provides a backdrop for more particular examples and interpretations of the “myschaunce” (159) associated with the galaunt. Not only is the galaunt explicitly likened to a man atop Fortune’s wheel, poised for his own downfall, but he is also repeatedly associated with “Lucifers fall” (61) through the sin of pride. The galaunt reflects and even causes the fall of the world around him, which the poet makes clear by citing the causal relationship between “new fangle guyse” and the biblical destruction of kingdoms and their people:

For many a vengeaunce as scrypture maketh mencyon
 Hath fallen to kyngdomes in sondry wyse
 And fynally put the people in dystruccyon
 For theyr obstynacy / a[nd] newe fangle guyse
 Alas englande that somtyme was so wyse.
 (36–40)⁴⁶

The poet takes considerable time to explain in different and myriad ways the immorality of the “newe dyssymulacyon” that “consumeth” England (11) and the dramatic changes it effects. For instance, the galaunt aesthetic is described as “dysfygurynge nature” (23), as an act that “causeth deth” (124), and as an event that will cause the “transmygracyon” of the English into Babylon (171).

When he describes the specific garments of galaunts, the poet depicts new forms of change in the garments' ever-shifting, ever-manipulated shapes, substance, and durability. He states:

Beholde the rolled hodes / stuffed with flockes.
 The newe broched doublettes / open at the brestes
 Stuffed with pectoll / of theyr loues smockes.
 Theyr gownes and theyr cotes / shred all in lystes.
 (183–86)

This description represents not merely the “newe” look of clothing in this period, but the way clothes were being individually modified; the garments are “broched,” or studded with ornaments, “rolled,” “stuffed,” “shred,” or worn “open.” In a similar way the poet complains that people are spending all their creative energies and intellectual resources on this one particular imaginative form:

All people laboure of this newe dysguysynge.
 In forgyng theyr fantasyes / to maynteyne pryde.
 He is nowe wysest / that can moost of deuysynge
 Good makynge of a man is nowe layde on syde.
 This newe araye is brought vp / in this lande to wyde
 And yet for all that it may not last a yere.
 England may wayle / that euer it came here.
 (176–82)

This emphasis on the creative process of self-fashioning (Idley uses similar wording, speaking of the galaunt's garments as “[n]ew shappis his fantasie was to devise”) reveals an important aspect of the figure's appeal to cultural commentators.⁴⁷ Words such as “fantasye” and “deuysynge” suggest that the galaunt, as the embodiment of a highly personalized and stylized aesthetic based inherently on rapid change and short-lived appeal (rather than moral, steadfast character: “Good makynge of a man” [179]), provides an optimal mechanism for exploring self-fashioning as a formulation of literary creativity.

As in the earlier poem “On the Times,” the galaunt's changing aesthetic in the *Treatise* becomes a tool for thinking through various other types of cultural change, and especially for thinking through England's own particular reputation for aesthetic variability. Here the recent change in dress is blamed directly on the French. While the *Treatise* is not as overt as Bishop Alcock implies in tying the historical emergence of the galaunt to the English

soldiers expelled from France at the end of the Hundred Years War, the suggestion is certainly there. Alcock's narrative about tail-turning soldiers who have been pillaged of their own attire and forced to return to England flamboyantly costumed as the enemy is a dramatic enhancement of two anti-French stanzas in the *Treatise* that complain generally about having left "[o]ur gentylnes / for galauntyse" (48) in France, and specifically about the "galauntes progenye vyperious / That out of Fraunce be fledde" (50–51). Situating "galauntyse" against "gentylnes" makes clear the extent of the threat, which is positioned to replace not merely English garments but the entire social and national code by which the English historically (and ideally) lived their lives. Thus the galaunt's foreign garments, "[o]ther nacyons refuse" (41), pollute England not only through their imitation of the "hatefull pryde and lothsome vncleennes" of the French (44), but also through their display of newly encultured values, such as personalized style.⁴⁸

While the French are the immediate foil, the poet makes a point of situating the galaunts' eccentric mutability in a longer narrative about the recurrent history of English transformation at the hands of foreigners. Like the earlier galaunt poem, and like the galaunts' French fashions themselves, the refrain of the *Treatise* ("England may wayle / that euer it came here") keeps the subtext of invasion ever present. A later passage reminds the reader that the incursion of galaunts is just the latest in England's extensive record of military—and linguistic—instability:

Forget not lightly / how many straungers.
 Haue entered this kingdome / and kepte the possession.
 Fyue tymes / as wryteth old cronyclers
 And chaunged our tungen / in sundry dyuysyon.
 (204–7)

According to this poet, then, the galaunt does more than just *look* like an invading enemy in his French fashions; his ever-changing aesthetic recalls—even performs—the numerous conversions of identity undergone by the English themselves in former times. The source of the "old cronyclers" for this discussion was most likely Higden's *Polychronicon*, although the poet appears to have slightly exaggerated the narrative he finds in his source. Higden follows Henry of Huntington in describing both past and future political ruptures caused by English vices, but like Huntington, he lists only three invasions—those of the Danes, the Normans, and (in the future) the Scots—rather than the five mentioned by the *Treatise*.⁴⁹ At this point in his text Higden also discusses English *varietas vestium* as part of his larger fascination,

discussed by Galloway, with *varietas* as an English national trait: in Higden's words, "adeoque tunc varium erit seculum, ut varietas mentium multimoda vestium variatione designetur" [and to such an extent then will the age be varied, that the variety of mind will be represented by the multiple variety of clothing].⁵⁰ The poet of the *Treatise* seems to have absorbed Higden's narrative about *varietas vestium*, for while his directive about remembering England's divisive past certainly invokes the customary warning about the galaunts' prophecy, it also endows the figure of the galaunt with a more particular historical background, locating his hermeneutic power squarely in the English experience of and effects of cultural polyvalency. Rather than being the simple enemy of England, the galaunt becomes the embodiment of an England formed by repeated and "sundry dyuysyon": a patchwork history of nations, languages, cultures, and styles.

Like "On the Times," the *Treatise's* focus on English mutability and hybridity reveals itself in the language and structure of the poem as well. As if reenacting the divisions that "chaunged our tungen," the *Treatise* undergoes its own transformation partway through the poem, suddenly becoming a formal dissection of the galaunt's figure and name. Starting roughly ten stanzas into the poem, depending on the manuscript, a protracted acrostic ties the seven letters in the word "galaunt" to the seven sins, effectively dividing the figure into smaller rhetorical pieces as if to aid a more microscopic understanding of his fragmented makeup. In two of the three manuscripts the shift in poetic form is introduced by an abbreviated acrostic explicitly displaying the verses' new visual structure:

G for glotony that began in paradyse.
 A for Auaryce that regneth the world thorough.
 L for luxury that noryssheth euery vyce.
 A for Accydy that dwelleth in towne and borough.
 V for Wrathe that seketh both land and forough.
 N for noying Enuy that dwelleth euery-where.
 T for toylous pryde: these myscheuen oure land here.⁵¹

Next, a series of seven stanzas expands the acrostic, so that each of the word's seven letters becomes the centerpiece for a highly alliterative stanza exploring the seven sins and their many associative evils. The "G" and "A" that begin "galaunt," for example, produce the following:

O thou gay galaunt / by thyne vnthryfty name.
 With gabbynge & glosynge / gettest that thou hast

Gyle was thy father / and Jalousye thy dame
 In Jettynge / in Janglynge thy dayes ben past.
 For all thy glorious goynge / age gnaweth fast
 Thy glased lyfe and glotony / be glewed so in fere
 That Englande may wayle / that euer it came here.

Appetytes of auaryce / be to them so amerous
 Abusyon and arrogaunce / be of one affynyte
 Aduenture and angre / ben aye so debatous.
 Faynynnge estate / of counterfet auctoryte
 Adulacyon of aduenture / mayst thou not auaunt the
 As a lyer in goodnes / in thyne araye doest appere
 England may wayle / that euer it came here.
 (64–77)

Toward the end of the galaunt acrostic the poet seems to get overwhelmed by his ambitious poetic form, losing his focus on the seven sins. As Julia Boffey points out in her elucidation of the poem's manuscript context, scribes and printers in turn jumbled the form and/or the rhymes in the final stanzas of the acrostic, most likely from verbal overload.⁵² Indeed, as the stanzas of the acrostic persist, the alliteration becomes overwhelming for readers as well, not only because of its visual and verbal surplus and its tongue-twisting challenge to reciters of the poem, but also because of its associative inundation. The powerful effect of the bewildering array of iniquities recorded here is to make the galaunt seem wildly and excessively erratic, someone who leaps from one behavior to another for no reason except aesthetic similarity (here acoustical and alphabetical correspondence) in the same way he changes his fashions. Yet as a poetic experiment in aesthetic organization, this intriguing acrostic also creates in the galaunt an organizing principle for this bewildering array of vices, for the galaunt's exhaustive catalogue of sins also makes him a type of English everyman who characterizes the vices possessed by "all our nacyon" (85).⁵³

If the ornamental poetics of the acrostic are meant to expose the multifarious and interwoven network of sins that makes up the Englishman's ornamental style, they serve another important stylistic purpose as well: exposing the poet himself as a type of galaunt. The visual excess of these verses, especially in the manuscripts with the double acrostic, do more than mimic the galaunt's lavish decoration. They indulge—self-consciously, but not satirically, it seems—in precisely that obsessive love of style for style's sake that the galaunt embodies. Even as it castigates visual uniqueness, therefore, the

mannered artifice of the form asks that this poem be especially enjoyed for its visual qualities. The acrostic itself was a form more overtly favored by French than English poets in the Middle Ages,⁵⁴ and elsewhere in the poem there are hints that the poet has succumbed in other ways to his own form of rhetorical *galauntise*. For example, the reader is treated to a healthy dose of ostentatiously Frenchified and Latinate words, such as “dyssymulacyon” (11) “intoxycacyoun” (51), “transmygracyoun” (171), “perseuerauntlye” (215), and the notable “peryllous pronostycacyon” (193). Likewise, the poet shows off an impressive number of terms for contemporary fashions, some of which, like the familiar “non sequitur,” best known in this period as a type of collar around the neck, have meanings that play on the intersection of sartorial and rhetorical ornament in themselves: “So many purfled garments / furred with non sequitur / With so many penyles purses / hath no man sawe” (141–42). In this period of the fifteenth century, in fact, the word “galaunt” came to be specifically associated with ornate language as well as with ornate clothing, and in this vein the poet’s citations of the galaunt’s verbal conquests, from linguistic novelties (such as the aforementioned new “tunges” imposed with his invasion) to standard complaints about rhetorical disguisings (the “glosynge” and lying alluded to above), simultaneously speak to the subject of the galaunt’s ornamentation.⁵⁵ The poet’s disclosure of his own inner galaunt corresponds to his uneasiness about whether the galaunt represents the English in foreign disguise or the inherent hybridity of English identity itself.⁵⁶

Added to this evidence of poet-as-galaunt is the fact that the *Treatise* signs off as if the galaunt were the speaker of the poem rather than its object: “Thus endeth this galaunt,” writes the scribe below the poem. The galaunt is associated with poetry-making in a variety of ways in late-medieval poems, most often, as in the earlier poem “On the Times,” as the singer of his own song. In this respect the galaunt’s signature and the ballad form of the *Treatise* (elsewhere called “Song of a Galaunt”) correspond to other songs such as the fifteenth-century “Huff! A Galaunt,” published by Rossell Hope Robbins, whose refrain, the second epigraph of this chapter, emphasizes the song’s self-reflexive nature: “Huff! A galawnt, vylable! / Thus syngyth galawntys in here revel.”⁵⁷ The song in the Digby *Mary Magdelene* offers a similar performative circularity, with the galaunt entering the stage singing a song about his entrance: “Her[e] shal entyr a galavnt thus seying: / . . . Hof, hof, hof! A frisch new galaunt!”⁵⁸ Wendy Scase also points out that in one version of the fifteenth-century poem she titles “Proud Gallants and Popeholy Priests,” the galaunt is turned into the speaker of the poem’s clerkly satire.⁵⁹ These poems cannot seem to decide whether they are commentary *on* galaunts or

commentary *by* galaunts; while they clearly mock the figure's self-involved nature, they also suggest, in a Baudelairean sense, that the galaunt's role is, like the poet's, that of cultural experiencer and commentator. Not only is the galaunt made to describe what he is wearing—translating visual appearance into poetic terms, and in this sense demonstrating one of the more difficult roles of the poet who chooses vestimentary satire—but also he is made to take on the voice of his own satire. The apparently self-generated aspect of this satire suggests a level of irony about the galaunts' sartorial self-fashioning not often apparent in moralizing discourses about clothing and fashions in this period. Having the galaunt sing his own poetic caricature both enhances the satire and undermines it, asking readers on the one hand to imagine the galaunt's fashions as naive imitations worn by a simpleton, and on the other hand to understand them as sophisticated statements of irony crafted by a medieval *flâneur*.

The few critics who have worked on the manuscript culture of fifteenth-century galaunt poems describe a particularly fluid, changeable, evidently experimental poetic and scribal process that adapts popular material and that changes to keep up with the change of fashions; as Boffey puts it, the text of the *Treatise* is "quite simply invitingly unstable."⁶⁰ One might argue that medieval writers found this subject equally attractive as a test of their knowledge of both cultural trends and poetic versatility. As Sponsler has discussed, the conventional trope of indescribability was in this period ingeniously appropriated as an expression of the idea that "even linguistic invention cannot keep pace with clothing's rampant spread."⁶¹ For the anonymous poets of "On the Times" and *Treatise of a Galaunt*, statements about the difficult poetic process they have undertaken seem to speak on some level to the creative pleasure generated by the topic of the galaunt as well as to his power as a figure for the creative process itself. In their up-to-the-minute descriptions of galaunt fashions and in their imitations of and experiments with *galaunt-ise* aesthetics as a recognizable English poetic form, however, these poets also engage with one of the more problematical aspects of the galaunt as a literary type, which is his creative defiance of existing moral paradigms regarding material goods. In these poems the characteristic portrayals of the galaunts as social and military insurgents, racial hybrids, and vice-ridden consumers are folded into a remarkable singularity of purpose and symbolism. As we see in his self-reflexively self-fashioning songs, the galaunt's clothing, behavior, history, and speech on some level serve the same all-encompassing purpose, which is to draw attention to the topic of highly mannered, changeable form itself.

FORTUNE AND THE GALAUNT:
FALLING, DICING, DRESSING

Haec nostra uis est, hunc continuum ludum ludimus.

[Here is the source of my power, the game I always play.]

—Fortune speaking (via Philosophy) to Boethius, *Consolatio* II.pr.2.8

Prior to my discussion in this chapter, the galaunt appeared twice in this study, each time in his relationship to Fortune's spinning wheel. The fifteenth-century morality play that served as my opening example in chapter 1 describes the king at the top of the wheel (Regno) as "ce galant qui est la hault" [that gallant who is up high], the imminent victim of Fortune's change of favors. Likewise, in chapter 2 I discussed an early-fifteenth-century illuminated French manuscript of Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* in which the king atop Fortune's wheel is portrayed as a stereotypical galaunt figure with pointed shoes and pendant sleeves (plate 1). The texts on which I have focused in this chapter also underscore the association. The *Treatise of a Galaunt*, for example, explicitly likens the galaunt's variability to that of the man suffering Fortune's "fresshely" formed whims: "Many a worthy man / bryngeth he to sorowe and care," the poet states, "Where Fortune somtyme / fresshely on hym loughes" (31–32).⁶² As well, the highly mannered and somewhat overly complex poetic forms used in both "On the Times" and the *Treatise* demonstrate a type of "verbal swagger" that is elsewhere explicitly associated with Fortune's vacillations.⁶³

In an important way, the galaunt's association with Fortune's wheel speaks to his characteristic vice of pride. Fifteenth-century texts in particular seem to use the trope of the galaunt atop Fortune's wheel to play out in material terms the moral consequences of prideful appearance and behavior, revealing how the motif of Fortune's ever-changing wheel was often keyed to the prevalent biblical anecdote that "Pride goeth before destruction: and the spirit is lifted up before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).⁶⁴ In the prologue of Book II of his conduct manual *Instructions to His Son* (1445–50), for example, Peter Idley spends almost two hundred lines exploring the subject of prideful appearances and dress, to which he ties a series of spectacular downfalls: Lucifer's biblical fall, Adam and Eve's fall from grace, England's moral descent and fallen reputation, and eventually, the inevitable fall of all mortals from Fortune's wheel. Idley's discussion of Fortune's wheel leads directly to his con-

demnation of “galauntis” (II.170) as prime examples of the “disguysynge of clothis” (II.171) that he has been discussing. These stanzas in turn lead to the first tale of the book, which starts by describing the tragic death of one specific galaunt whose “ffresshe cote” offends Fortune herself:

Ther was a knyght that loued nyce array;
 New shappis his fantasie was to devise.
 He wolde that non were so galaunt and gay
 As he, and that in all maner of wyse:
 Twoo or thre shapes might not suffise,
 Suche was his appetite and his hertis desire,
 To be arraied giselie [elegantly] and of a straunge attire.

Amonge all othir he hadde a ffresshe cote
 Was all to-lagged with poisies on euery side,
 And botoned with siluere to the harde throte.
 He knewe no grounde he coude on abide,
 His mynde was sette so highlie on pride;
 But Dame Fortune with an vnware clappe
 Bokeled hym in a clothyng of anothir shappe.⁶⁵

This passage underscores the important role that the literary trope of Fortune played in late-medieval discussions and conceptualizations of fashion, as I discussed earlier in chapter 2. Fortune’s proprietary control over vestimentary mutability is implicit in Idley’s text; her sudden and dramatic reshaping of the shape-shifting galaunt implies that, like Arachne’s famous metamorphosis at the hands of Athena, this mortal is being penalized for his audacious performance in what Fortune feels is her own field of expertise. More to the point for my current argument, in this passage Fortune completes the series of images in Idley’s prologue in which prideful clothing both causes and symbolizes a fall or misfortune. The “clothyng of another shappe” that the poet refers to here is the beating and murder of the galaunt, who is caught unawares by his enemies when he goes riding in his “fresshe arraye” (II.195). A similar fate then occurs to a prideful clerk who dons the garment after the galaunt’s death.⁶⁶

At the same time that it serves to highlight the consequences of pride, therefore, the repeated poetic association of galaunts with the victims on Fortune’s wheel also makes the topic of worldly changeability, and especially the phenomenological events of sudden change, chance, and downfall, an integral part of understanding galaunt aesthetics. The implication is that galaunt

aesthetics—the embracing and aestheticizing of change itself through a series of ever-changing, shape-shifting fashions—keeps ever present the transitory nature of worldly experience. Poems such as “On the Times” and *Treatise of a Galaunt* continually tie their galaunts’ changeable appearances to the possibility of future misfortune, invoking England’s demise, acts of military insurrection, and the mysterious prophecy against galaunts, but unlike Idley’s text, they fall short of actually punishing the galaunts themselves. One point of this exercise seems to be to explore and to perpetually extend the experience—or the anticipation of the experience—of material change itself. As the galaunt named Curiosity in the Digby *Mary Magdalene* explains, being a galaunt is not about prideful appearance, but rather about a certain type of lived knowledge: “I lefe in this wor[l]d, I do it for no pride”: I do it not for pride, but because *I live in this world*.⁶⁷ Like Baudelaire’s dandy, who is said to hold “une intelligence subtile de tout le mécanisme moral de ce monde” [a subtle understanding of all the moral mechanisms of the world], these galaunts seem to exemplify a subtle awareness and even irony about the interlocked moral and material habits of their own culture.⁶⁸

As I discuss above, several late-medieval poems on the galaunt, including “On the Times” and the *Treatise*, include as part of their poetic project a certain level of stylistic playfulness and creativity, even going so far as to position the galaunt as the singer of his own satire. These poems’ repeated associations of aesthetic playfulness with the cycles of material and cultural transience symbolized by Fortune’s wheel might be helpfully understood through Johan Huizinga’s pioneering theory of play in *Homo Ludens*. According to Huizinga, cultural play, which is rooted in the rhythm of lived experience or “the rhythm of life” epitomized by the cycle of birth and death, denotes one of the foundational human experiences of sacred order.⁶⁹ “[O]rder, tension, movement, change, solemnity, rhythm, rapture”: Huizinga’s list of the elemental aspects of play accords with many of the themes found in galaunt poems.⁷⁰ Also, poetic rhythm is one expression of culture’s underlying ludic principle; in Huizinga’s words, “[s]uch elements as the rhyme and the distich derive from and only have meaning in those timeless, ever-recurring patterns of play: beat and counter-beat, rise and fall, question and answer, in short, rhythm.”⁷¹ As we have seen, the medieval galaunt expresses such ludic rhythms in poetic terms: his changing fashions, his association with the rise and fall of Fortune’s wheel, and his ever-wandering gait—his constant movement, or “glorious goynge,” in the words of the *Treatise* (68)—are mirrored by and informed by his lyric versification.

Along with his ever-changing fashions, the galaunt of late-medieval English poetry is explicitly associated with another object of play that con-

nects him to the trope of Fortune's wheel and to the ludic rhythms of worldly experience which that trope represents: dice used for playing games of chance. Since antiquity dicing was considered the specific domain of Fortune, an association that remained popular in the late-medieval period.⁷² Chaucer uses the metaphor in his Boethian *Knight's Tale*, where Arcite dramatically apostrophizes to Palamoun, "[w]el hath Fortune yturned thee the dys" (CT 1.1237), when he perceives his cousin and rival to have the upper hand. Similarly, Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* describes Fortune's changeability in terms of the popular game of hazard: "The pley of Fortune lik hasard retournable, / With sodeyn chaung of fals felicite" (5.1882–83). The galaunts' association with dicing games at first seems merely to be another aspect of their immoral and excessive behavior; galaunts, we are to understand, indulge in dicing games in the same way that they consume excessive amounts of food and drink and wear excessive amounts of new clothing. As the song "Huff! A Galaunt" describes it, three dice are the only objects likely to be found in a galaunt's purse:

Galaunt, by thy gyrdyl ther hangyth a purss;
 Ther-in ys neyther peny ner crosse,
 Butt iij dysse, and crystys curse—
 Huff, a galawnt!⁷³

Yet even this brief reference to dice shows their symbolic potency in relation to the galaunt. Putting aside for a moment the exact nature of the dicing game implied here, we can see that the dice are related to several key aspects of the galaunt: his financial irresponsibility, his misleading show of money; his inherent connection with mortality, sin, and the burdens of the material world in the reference to "Christ's curse."⁷⁴ Finding dice rather than coins in a galaunt's purse, moreover, specifically captures the sense of misplaced or frustrated expectation so often exemplified by galaunts: they offer not money, but the promise of an attempt to attain money, or conversely, evidence of the game of chance that consumed—that will always consume—the money that once existed.

Dicing games of chance provided a particular type of shorthand for the larger questions generated by the trope of Fortune's wheel. As Rhiannon Purdie points out, unlike other popular gambling games in the Middle Ages—cards, chess, sporting events—dice represent the only game wherein "the *sole* operative factor (barring cheating) is chance."⁷⁵ The dice imagined in the galaunt's purse in "Huff! A Galaunt" were most likely meant to symbolize the game of hazard, which involved three dice, a preliminary knowledge of

the probability of rolling certain numbers with these dice, and a series of random, ever-changing rules that complicated the chance of winning the game by rolling a particular number.⁷⁶ Medieval authors' depictions of hazard suggest an appreciation of the game's implicit mirroring of the arbitrariness of life, and of its playful ability to interrogate the daily workings of causality, temporality, and determinism.⁷⁷ Three dice were also associated with playing lots, as well as with playing a related fortune-telling game pervasive throughout Europe that was rendered into poetic verse in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁷⁸ Whether for purposes of gambling or prophecy, three dice were, as Thomas M. Kavanagh points out, "the preferred randomizers of medieval Europe," used in various ways to reenact and redirect the experience of worldly unpredictability.⁷⁹

What is particularly fascinating about this picture of late-medieval dicing culture is how seamlessly it fits into the galaunt's overall program of aestheticized disorder, suggesting even further the extent to which late-medieval English galaunt poems together formulated a distinct ethos or methodology based in aesthetically recreating and reengaging the experience of instability. According to the social historian Gerda Reith, the phenomenon of gambling facilitates exactly this kind of knowledge; gambling games such as dicing, she says, "act as a kind of theatre in which human relations with uncertainty are symbolically played out."⁸⁰ While the unpredictability of the dicing game creates a microcosm of the transitory world, its strict rules, repetitive actions, and unequivocal outcomes offer something that the outside world does not: a means of *concluding* that unpredictability. Reith argues that the associations of gambling with greed and personal gain are misleading. In practice, the appeal of gambling is rooted in an obsessive revisiting of the sensation of losing and gaining security and order: in the excitement derived from a repeated and deliberate "seeking out of uncertainty and the need for the resolution of that uncertainty."⁸¹ In the aesthetic world of the galaunt, falling or losing in its various forms seems to develop from a general moral hazard associated with that figure's excessive changeability of form into a deliberate methodology and a mode of engaging with the world. Dicing is effectively not about earnings, or even winning, but rather about negotiating the experience of losing what one has; as Chaucer's Franklin puts it in reference to his own son's gambling habits: "To pleye at dees and to despende / And lese al that he hath is his usage" (*CT* 5.690–91).⁸²

While dice are not usually considered sartorial objects—perhaps with the exception of the dice necklace worn by Fortune in Charles d'Orléans's *Fortunes Stabilnes* that I discussed in chapter 2—in medieval practice the game of dicing maintained a distinct vestimentary feature. The custom of wagering

one's clothing during a gambling game was one of the most highly troped elements of literary gambling scenes. Summing up a dice game that takes place during a feast at Arthur's court, for example, Wace's mid-twelfth century *Roman de Brut* declares: "Tels i puet aseir vestuz / Ki al partir s'en lieve nuz" ["The man who sat down to play clothed might rise naked at the close of play"].⁸³ Centuries later the fifteenth-century *Tale of Beryn*, an anonymous continuation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, characterizes its gambling mercantile hero in similar terms: as coming home "al naked" each night after dicing with his friends.⁸⁴ In the period between these two texts, the rich selection of dicing poems offered by the goliardic poets of the thirteenth century, a popular genre in medieval England, effectively codified the association of dicing with clothing. In these poems clothing is presented as the *lingua franca* and main currency of the dicer: players cast dice for each other's garments, brag about their fine attire, shiver and complain when they are denuded, cheat one another out of their cloaks, parody ecclesiastical sumptuary laws, and curse their opponents with vestimentary eradication: "colum cuius regit Clotho, / quod sepe nudatur" [May Clotho wield her spindle / So that his garments dwindle].⁸⁵ In the context of these poems, experiencing the naked back—*dorso nudo*—of dispossession is a gambler's rite of passage and ultimate ethos.⁸⁶ It is also, moreover, a practice that explicitly corresponds to Fortune's own powers of dispossession; in "O Fortuna," for example, one of the most famous dicing poems of the *Carmina Burana* manuscript, the gambler's naked back—perhaps like Boethius's stripped protagonist—is depicted as a deliberate rebuke of that goddess's powers, when the speaker-poet declares to Fortune: "nunc per ludum / dorsum nudum / fero tui sceleris" [now through the game / I hold my bare back / to your wickedness].⁸⁷

Many literary portraits of the English galaunt seem to capitalize on the same sophisticated cultural playfulness depicted by early dicing poems, in which the linked activities of casting dice and changing or exchanging clothes stand in for and comment on the larger problems posed by Fortune's wheel about material possession and worldly transience. While I have kept my discussion in this chapter to the way in which the galaunt appears to have epitomized this trope, adding to its significance by situating its aesthetic upheaval in contemporary contexts and events, the symbiotic connection between clothing and dicing can be seen in other contexts as well. If we glance at Lydgate's poem "That now is hey some tyme was grase," for example, which depicts the ever-changing, ever-fading "freshenys" (34) of all things, we can see how it speaks wordlessly to the ethos of the "fresh" galaunt as a larger symbol of the always passing, often edifying transitory world:

Nowe clothed in blake, nowe clothed in grene;
 Nowe lustye, nowe in sobernes;
 Now clothe of golde that shynyth shene,
 Nowe rede, in token of hardynes,
 Nowe all in white, for clennes,
 Nowe sise, nowe synke, nowe ambbes aas;
 The chaunce stondes in no stabulenes,
 That now is hey some tyme was grase.
 (97–104)⁸⁸

In this passage the trope of vestimentary change sets the rhythm and pacing of temporal transformations and adjustments, while three dice mark the speed with which change, or “chaunce,” can arrive. Like the highly wrought literary styles of the galaunt poems I have discussed, Lydgate’s use of the visually arresting anaphora here—whose visual and metrical form breaks, appropriately, after the dice are cast—insists on the aesthetic nature of change, presenting a rhythmically compelling arena in which dressing and dicing play out in aesthetic terms the effects of passing time on the material things of the world, including—perhaps—lyric verse itself.

CONCLUSION

The medieval dicer’s practiced skill at losing his shirt seems a curiously appropriate end to a book that began with Boethius’s theories about the transcendent possibilities of material dispossession. Boethius’s text, I argued in chapter 1, teaches that losing one’s objects—being stripped of one’s goods and clothing, for example—provides a unique opportunity for an individual to examine the value of the lost or changed object as well as the cyclical habits and practices of attachment that have evolved in relation to the object. As later writers take up the trope of vestimentary change, especially within the culture of the emerging fashion system, its potential to express the experience of the transitory material world and the knowledge gained by that experience persists and even grows. Changes in the sartorial symbolism of the goddess Fortune as the Middle Ages progressed present one example of this development, as I discussed in chapter 2. And in chapter 3, we saw two thirteenth-century writers, a bishop and a satirical poet, examine the ideal of divine stasis through contemporary stylistic changes in ecclesiastical attire. Likewise, Griselda’s stability in the face of changes in Fortune’s *temporeel riches* are used by Chaucer to examine the changing consumer practices

and rights of ownership of contemporary women with regard to their garments, as I discuss in chapter 4. My discussion of the English galaunt's radical use of clothing in the current chapter concludes this line of argument by demonstrating the way in which late-medieval poets used this figure to playfully rethink the teleology of misfortune that is always already encoded in medieval discourses of clothing and of aesthetic novelty.

In many ways the form of cultural play that I uncover in the late-medieval galaunt poems has been ever present throughout the chapters of this book, most overtly evident in the way the texts themselves poetically stage their concerns. From the alternating prosimetric form of Boethius's Menippean satire to the bilingual verses of the macaronic lyrics, and from the excessively ascetic poetics of Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* to the excessively ornamented styles of Durand's biblical allegory and the galaunt poems, the texts that have been examined in these chapters urgently draw their readers' attention to the inherent variability of literary form. For the writers of satirical verse and of the extended allegorical descriptions of fashions worn by Fortune, this volatility of form speaks to a playfulness essential for the poem's topic and tone. Even in the texts we might tend to read more seriously, however, such as those by Durand and by Boethius (although an argument has been made that the *Consolatio* has been read far too seriously),⁸⁹ these formal features express a literary dynamism—especially in the interplay between prose and poetry in Boethius, and the imaginative hermeneutic contortions and extensive *amplificatio* in Durand—that playfully involves the reader in its own creative endeavors. As these texts demonstrate, stylistic playfulness is one of the more consistent literary responses to cultural pressures involving fashion as a phenomenon and change as a concept.



Plate 1 This illumination, from an early-fifteenth-century French translation of Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae*, takes to new heights the standard trope of vestimentary change in the iconography of Fortune's wheel (c. 1410). By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Cambridge, Trinity Hall MS 12, fol. 3r.



Plate 2 An early-fourteenth-century manuscript of William Durand's *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* depicts the bishop's order of vestments in a historiated initial T at the top of the page (detail). An ape mimics the bishop's dress in the bas-de-page (see figure 3.1). © British Library Board. All Rights Reserved. London, British Library, Add. 31032, fol. 33v.



Plate 3 Syon Cope with Opus Anglicanum embroidery (1300–1320).
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CONCLUSION



The chapters of this book have treated the symbolic function of clothing in medieval literature and culture by examining the theoretical roots and the material circumstances of a single multifaceted trope—vestimentary change—in high- and late-medieval Europe. After demonstrating the importance of this trope to the dominant medieval theory of material change, that of Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae*, I turned my attention to tracing the literary development of vestimentary change as an organizing principle for the perception and experience of ornamentation from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. I have in effect mapped this historical development twice: first, in chapter 2, through a discussion of the high- and late-medieval transformations of Boethius's theory into praxis, as evidenced by the practical reception of his text and by the changing ornament and function of the goddess Fortune as the Middle Ages progress. I then revisited this evolution more slowly and from different perspectives in chapters 3 through 5 by examining a particular cultural tension in each century that is explored through the trope of vestimentary changeability: standards of ecclesiastical dress in the thirteenth century, powers of wifely consumption in the fourteenth century, and cultural aesthetics of excess in the fifteenth century.

Throughout these chapters my central aim has been to reveal *alteration* as one of the enduring structural elements of the medieval experience and perception of clothing and ornament. The intrinsic ability of clothing both to symbolize and to enact change existed before it became the primary agent of systemic change in the fashion system that took root during the period

of this study, but its codification in this system magnified and accelerated its properties of changeability in a way that seems to have been especially provocative and fascinating for English writers of the period, who found in fashion's ceaseless diversity an unexpectedly powerful and negotiable cultural trope. On the one hand, I have shown how writers used the trope of clothing to examine the way changing ideas in their cultures were materially manifested: how certain clothing styles became associated with the goddess Fortune, or how transformations in ecclesiastical dress reflected current ideas about comfort, style, and status. On the other hand, I have shown how these writers used clothing to explore the effects of the material world more generally upon high- and late-medieval ideologies: for example, how material mutability gets taken up as a prompt for thinking through ideas about English national identity, about bourgeois aesthetics, about poetic style, and about the concept of "change" itself in the medieval imaginary.

The findings about clothing in this study can be usefully extended to material culture at large. Recent work in material culture has explored the potency of material objects as intermediaries of the material world that make meaning in their own right. The "new materialism" popularized by Bill Brown demands that we turn our critical attention to the ways in which unsung material objects "organize our public and private affection."¹ Daniel Miller has similarly described the importance of examining our habitual cultural practices and beliefs involving material objects, a critical method that he calls "the ethnographic experience of the mundane," of which he offers as a prime example "the intimate relationship . . . between ourselves and our clothing."² Webb Keane also uses clothing as an important example for understanding the way objects guide our cultural practices and the ideologies connected to those practices. Keane is especially interested in what he calls "the openness" of things and their historicizing significations: the ability of an object to signify meaning beyond the subject who interprets it or the historical moment in which it exists.³ While the many meanings of medieval clothing have been the subject of substantial critical work, especially in the last decade, *Fashioning Change* is the first study to situate medieval vestimentary discourses within this larger conversation about the potential of material objects to make cultural meaning not only legible, but possible. If this material potentiality is brought upon our understanding of objects as they figure in literary texts, then we have greater means at our disposal to think through more traditional literary uses of clothing symbolism, such as in allegorical hermeneutics, and how these uses cohabit with other modes of signification within a text. Rethinking the multivalences of medieval material objects in literary texts reveals that there is not as much of a gap between the literary

world of objects and the material world of objects as there was once thought to be. This kind of consideration allows us to reexamine the symbolic function of objects in high- and late-medieval Europe, a culture that could signal its fascination with patient Griselda's clothing, for example, but that refused unilateral interpretations of that clothing, preferring instead to offer multiple perspectives—in Chaucer's case, as an allegory of the Christian soul *and* as a commentary on the dressing and spending habits of bourgeois wives. Likewise, it allows us to conceive of a culture in which Tertullian's *pallium*, Boethius's prison garb, Bishop Durand's *capa*, Chaucer's *pilch*, and the differentiated black garments of Lydgate and Charles d'Orléans could speak simultaneously to those individuals' experiences with regard to material objects and to their philosophical and poetical pursuit of immaterial knowledge in a material world.

Finally, the historical period that I study in this book marks an important shift in the cultural perspective about ornament and change that will develop more profoundly in later periods. In high- and late-medieval English culture, what seems trivial—fashion and its objects—becomes an occasion for re-envisioning and reinvention. The cult of novelty embraced by late-medieval galaunt poems is the most dramatic illustration of this impulse, but even where I use examples of writers who explicitly resist sartorial change, such as in Durand's *Rationale*, or who depict infelicitous changes, such as in Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*, clothing still effectively functions as a way of embracing change, in that the garments described are themselves modified to signal types of permanence. This paradoxical gesture, which moralizes changing fashions on the one hand and delights in using clothing to effectuate change on the other, can help to shed light on other historical moments in which we see the most resistance to material change. Turning our attention to the ways in which reform is being materially signaled in these early texts, for example, allows us to see a connection between the changing fashions in the late-medieval period and the reforms of the early modern period, in which the condemnation of ornament features so prominently. The Reformation and pre-Reformation “stripping of the altars”—which, as late as the nineteenth century, was blamed for England's subsequent dearth of ornamental style—makes explicit the connection between politics, aesthetics, and literary style that can be found implicitly in high- and late-medieval England.⁴ Looking forward to the large-scale changes in material practices brought about by the Reformation provides further evidence that clothing was understood not simply in terms of superficial garb and interpretation but rather as a serious literary and worldly object, whose criticality becomes even more evident when it becomes targeted as the medium of material corruption.

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NOTES



INTRODUCTION

1. *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, 4 vols., ed. Henry Bergen, EETS e.s. 121–24 (London: Oxford University Press, 1924–27), 1. 621–23. It should be noted that Lydgate's text is an English rendering of Laurent de Premierfait's *Des Cas de nobles hommes et femmes* (1409), which was itself a prose version of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* (1355–60).
2. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 209.
3. Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
4. Barthes, 300.
5. McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 61.
6. Webb Keane, "Signs Are Not the Garb of Meaning: On the Social Analysis of Material Things," in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 193. See also Peter Corrigan, "Interpreted, Circulating, Interpreting: The Three Dimensions of the Clothing Object," in *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects*, ed. Stephen Harold Riggins (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 435–52, esp. 435, 443–46. See also E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 15–16.
7. Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 24.
8. R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 39.
9. *De Pallio*, PL 2:1029–50B. "On the Pallium," trans. S. Thelwall, in *The Antenice Fathers*, vol. 4, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and Arthur Cleveland Coxe (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 5–12. On Tertullian's use of Plato, see Paul McKechnie, "Tertullian's *de Pallio* and Life in Roman Carthage," *Prudentia* 24, no. 2 (1992): 44–66, esp. 56.

10. *PL* 2:1050B. Translation is McKechnie's.
11. *PL* 2:1050A.
12. The garment he wears invokes the legacy of Socrates, who, as I discuss in chapter 1, famously advocated owning and wearing a single *pallium* for all occasions and times of year, and whose legacy thus laid the groundwork for that garment's symbolic power in later years. Tertullian's text on the *pallium* has also been connected with the gown of Justin Martyr and Paul's cloak in 2 Timothy 4:13; see *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:13.
13. "De occurso meo uitia suffundo . . . Grande pallii beneficium est, sub cuius recogitatu improbi mores uel erubescunt" [My very sight puts vices to the blush . . . Grand is the benefit conferred by the Mantle, at the thought whereof moral improbity absolutely blushes]. *PL* 2:1050A.
14. *PL* 2:1050A.
15. *Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 657. All subsequent references to Chaucer's works refer to this edition. Although the authorship of Chaucer's "Proverbe" has come under question over the years, the opening inquiry seems a particularly relevant one for Chaucer, whose works contain numerous clothing references and allusions. Chaucer also uses a related line in Prudence's words to Melibee: "For as the proverbe seith, 'He that to muche embraceth, distreyneth litel'" (*CT* 7.1215). On the issue of authorship, see Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, "Explanatory Notes," 1089.
16. This opening question remains one of the more historically unique aspects of this short poem, as the two other main metaphors—the dramatic change in temperature and the 'all covet all lose' theme of the second stanza—exist as popular proverbial phrases in other English works of this period and especially following this poem. Bartlett J. Whiting and Helen W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1968), C365, H305; A91, M774; 039.
17. This regulation is for all who are allowed by law to wear fur, but especially for knights and clerks; it proclaims that linen must replace fur altogether in the summer season. See Edward III: 8–14 (1363), in *The Statutes of the Realm [SR]* (London: Dawsons, 1963), 1:381. For comparable complaints about the contemporary use of fur worn in the summer, see Francis Elizabeth Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1926), 68.
18. Laura F. Hodges, *Chaucer and Costume: The Secular Pilgrims in the General Prologue* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 233.
19. Later renditions of this proverb by Lydgate, Idley, and Henryson make clear that they address *coveitise* (Whiting and Whiting, A91).
20. *MED*, s.v. "pilch(e)" (n.) 1b. *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, ed. Richard Morris, EETS 7 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1865), 377.
21. Both sermons are discussed by G. R. Owst, in *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933; repr. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 404–5.
22. Select studies on the rise of consumer society that address fashion are Neil McKendrick, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa Publications, 1982); Robert Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976);

Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), and *An Age of Transition? Economy and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

23. Relevant studies on fashion and clothing include (listed chronologically): Stella Mary Newton, *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1980); John Scattergood, "Fashion and Morality in the Late Middle Ages," in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1987), 255–72; Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 1–67; Diane Owen Hughes, "Regulating Women's Fashions," in *Silences of the Middle Ages*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 1–54; Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994); Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, trans. Caroline Beamish (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), and "Narrating the Social Order: Medieval Clothing Laws," *CLIO* 21 (1992): 265–83; Susan Mosher Stuard, "Gravitas and Consumption," in *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West*, ed. Jacqueline Murray (New York: Garland, 1999), 215–42; Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Laura Hodges, *Chaucer and Costume and Chaucer and Clothing: Clerical and Academic Costume in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005); Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity during the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, and *Sea of Silk: A Textile Geography of Women's Work in Medieval French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), and Burns, ed., *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); *Clothing Culture, 1350–1650*, ed. Catherine Richardson (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Press, 2004); Carole Collier Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes, and Fine Clothing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Sarah-Grace Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007); Margaret Scott, *Medieval Dress and Fashion* (London: British Library, 2007); Special issue, "Cultures of Clothing in Later Medieval and Early Modern Europe," ed. Margaret F. Rosenthal, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2009); and Monica Wright, *Weaving Narrative: Clothing in Twelfth-Century French Romance* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010). A helpful discussion of the different arguments regarding fashion's emergence can be found in Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*, 46–60.

24. London, British Library, MS Harley 2398, fol. 9.

25. Margaret Scott's most recent book, *Medieval Dress and Fashion*, also argues that fashion existed as early as the twelfth century; see 11, 34–77.

26. Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*, 10, and chapter 2.

27. Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*, 52.

28. See, for example, her discussion of "nascent fashion," in *Fashion in Medieval France*, 179.

29. Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, esp. 1–23; and "Narrating the Social Order," 265–83.

30. Crane, esp. 1–9; 15–20; 85–89. My study of the phenomenology of medieval clothing has been deeply influenced by Crane’s discussion of the ways in which medieval luxury clothing can be seen to constitute and maintain identity, rather than merely falsifying it, and by her use of performance theory as the method best suited for that subject (see esp. 3–7).

31. Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, esp. 1–17; 23–26; 76–79; also *Sea of Silk*, esp. 2–3; 82–83. While Burns’s first study examines the “sartorial body,” or the body as it wears clothing, her second study treats the literary women said to create this courtly attire. Burns’s notion of “reading through clothes”—that is, using a critical method that attempts to understand clothing as a dynamic, active cultural force rather than merely a symbol—has proved particularly helpful throughout this book (*Courtly Love*, esp. 11–16).

32. *Performance of Self*, 13. Crane is one of the few scholars to discuss the significance of change as a concept in itself in sartorial discourses of the period, observing that diversity in clothing shape demonstrates “the importance of change, and its close relationship to expert tailoring, in the fashion system” (13). The literary-cultural importance of the tailor as the purveyor of change plays a central role in the imagination of thirteenth-century writers as well, as I discuss in chapter 3.

33. On the general discourse blaming foreign cultures for contemporary fashions, see Newton, 9–10.

34. On the specific English vice of *varietas vestium*, see Owst, 404–11, and Andrew Galloway’s more recent article, discussed below.

35. Andrew Galloway, “Latin England,” in *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*, ed. Kathy Lavezzo (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 41–95; esp. 59–65. In chapter 2, pp. 58–59, I suggest that Boethius’s text also played an important role in the prevalence of this concept in England.

36. Galloway, 64; 59. The second and third quotations here are Galloway’s translation of Higden.

37. Quotation from Robert Rypon, “Sermon on the Magdalene,” in London, British Library, MS Harley 4894, fol. 176b; translated in Owst, 404. For Tertullian’s expression of the same sentiment, see “On the Apparel of Women,” in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers* 4:14; *PL* 1:1305. This association was carried on into the Middle Ages; see Owst, 391–411. As Diane Owen Hughes describes it, luxury garments became “an inverse token of man’s shrinking stature in creation, recording his descent from the gods to the beasts that live above the earth, to those which crawl beneath it, and finally to the immobile and infertile world of metal and stone.” Hughes, “Regulating Women’s Fashions,” 144.

38. John of Reading, *Chronica Johannis de Reading et Anonymi Cantuariensis 1346–1367*, ed. James Tait (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1914), 89; my emphasis. Translation based on that of Rosemary Horrox, *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 131.

39. It is important to note that many of these Middle English words carry slightly different meanings from their modern counterparts, and that all of them correspond to notions of change or alteration. As I discuss in chapter 2, while the Middle English word *disgise*, for example, sometimes carried today’s sense of “disguise” as in concealing one’s identity, it meant first and foremost things that are “new,” “strange,” and “newfangled”; and as the *MED* makes clear, this definition includes special emphasis on changes in traditional attire, or “dress or trappings . . . altered from the conventional or simple style,”

s.v. “disgise,” 1a. Horrox also discusses this word on 339n31. See also Sponsler’s analysis of the way this type of terminology was used to control social difference in late-medieval England in *Drama and Resistance*, esp. 5–21.

40. *The Brut, or The Chronicles of England*, ed. Friedrich W. D. Brie, EETS o.s. 136.2 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1908), 296–97.

41. Lines 133, 167, 123, respectively, in the poem “On the Times,” in *Medieval English Political Writings*, ed. James M. Dean (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), 140–46. The alternate spelling of “fascion” exists in the C-text of the poem, published in Thomas Wright, ed., *Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History*, 2 vols., Rolls Series 14 (London: Longman, Green, 1859, 1861), 1:270–78. Susan Crane makes clear in a footnote that the emergence of this important word has been misdated by scholars: “Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones are two hundred years late in their claim that ‘the connection between fashion and change emerged in the Renaissance’” (*Performance of Self*, 184n22). By following the definition of “fascioun” in the *MED*, however, Crane locates the emergence of this meaning in the fifteenth century, whereas the example that I use in this book makes it clear that the meaning was used as early as 1380.

42. In the fifteenth century both verb and noun forms of the Middle English word “chaunge” specifically come to mean a change in (or of) clothes. See the *MED*, s.v. “chaunge” (n.), 7b; and “chaungen” (v.), 11c, 11d.

43. A popular and much-copied woodcut from 1542, for example, portrays the Englishman as a naked man with shears in his hand, unsure of what fashion to follow next. Thomas Dekker also describes English “Apishness” in fashion, linking it to treason. See Roze Henschell, “A Question of Nation: Foreign Clothes on the English Subject,” in *Clothing Culture*, 49–62; esp. 53–56. One of Valerius’s songs in Thomas Heywood’s *Rape of Lucrece* (1608) offers a characteristic example of the Englishman consumed with sartorial uncertainty:

The Spaniard loves his ancient slop,
The Lombard his Venetian,
And some like breechless women go,
The Russ, Turk, Jew, and Grecian:
The thrifty Frenchman wears small waist,
The Dutch his belly boasteth,
The Englishman is for them all,
And for each fashion coasteth.

Thomas Heywood, *The Rape of Lucrece* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey English Verse Drama Full-Text Database, 1994), lines 1615–22.

44. Barthes, 42.

CHAPTER ONE

1. I.pr.4.45; translation mine, based on Green, 14. All Latin quotations of Boethius are from James J. O’Donnell, *Boethius “Consolatio Philosophiae”* (Bryn Mawr, PA: Bryn Mawr Commentaries, 1990). Unless otherwise noted, English translations are from Richard H. Green, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1962). I have

occasionally preferred to use the translations of V. E. Watts, *Consolation of Philosophy* (New York: Penguin, 1969), or to offer a substitution of my own, with consultation of J. F. Niermeyer and C. Van de Kieft, eds., *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). Such decisions are cited in my notes.

2. *Bien Advisé et Mal Advisé* (Paris: Anthoine Vérard, 1498), Bibliothèque Nationale, Réserve Vélins, 602, quotation 85. Accessible online at the Bibliothèque Nationale at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k111047q.image.f85.langFR>. My awareness of Fortune's role in this play is indebted to Alan H. Nelson's article, "Mechanical Wheels of Fortune, 1100–1547," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 227–33, at 229–31. See also discussions in Louis Petit de Julleville, *Répertoire du théâtre comique en France au moyen-âge* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967), 39–41, 325, 329; and Werner Helmich, *Die Allegorie im Französischen Theater des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1976), 211–13.

3. The late-medieval figure of the fashionable gallant is often imagined on Fortune's wheel, a topic I discuss at greater length in chapter 5.

4. On this tradition, see Richard A. Dwyer, "The Tempting Integument," in *Boethian Fictions: Narratives in the Medieval French Versions of the "Consolatio Philosophiae"* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1976), 51. See also Peter Dronke, *Fabula: Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 15–32; and A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott, "Poetic Fiction and Truth: William of Conches, 'Bernard Silvester,' Arnulf of Orléans, and Ralph of Longchamps," in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c.1100–c.1375*, ed. Minnis and Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 113–64.

5. The most in-depth studies of medieval Fortune's symbolism are Howard R. Patch, *The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature* (New York: Octagon Books, 1974); Jerold C. Frakes, *The Fate of Fortune in the Early Middle Ages: The Boethian Tradition* (New York: Brill, 1988); Yasmina Foehr-Janssens and Emmanuelle Métry, eds., *La Fortune: Thèmes, Représentations, Discours* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2003); the compiled illuminations in Tamotsu Kurose, *Miniatures of Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Manuscripts* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1977); Larry Scanlon, "Sweet Persuasion: The Subject of Fortune in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde": "Subgit to alle Poesy"; Essays in Criticism*, ed. R. A. Shoaf and Catherine S. Cox (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), 211–23; L. O. Aranye Fradenburg, "My Worl-des Blisse: Chaucer's Tragedy of Fortune," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 98 (Summer 1999): 563–92; and Maura Nolan, "The Fortunes of *Piers Plowman* and Its Readers," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 20 (2006): 1–41. Of the extensive larger critical bibliography on Boethius, I have found most useful Pierre Courcelle, *La Consolation de philosophie dans la tradition littéraire: Antécédents et postérité de Boèce* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1967); Joachim Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1978, 2nd ed. 2006); Henry Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Margaret Gibson, ed., *Boethius: His Life, Thought, and Influence* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981); F. Anne Payne, *Chaucer and Menippean Satire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981); Seth Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue: Literary Method in "The Consolation of Philosophy"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); Ann Astell, *Job, Boethius, and Epic Truth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); John Marenbon, *Boethius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Mark Miller, *Philosophical Chaucer:*

Love, Sex, and Agency in the Canterbury Tales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. chapter 3; Joel C. Relihan, *The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's Consolation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); and Noel Harold Kaylor Jr. and Philip Edward Phillips, eds., *New Directions in Boethian Studies* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007).

6. This is a theme that is common to Marenbon's *Boethius* (2003) and Relihan's *Prisoner's Philosophy* (2006), as well as to Payne's earlier *Chaucer and Menippean Satire* (1981), all cited above. Miller argues to the contrary that the aporias in Boethius's text reflect the inherently dialectical form of philosophical reflection, which necessarily confounds philosophical agreement or disagreement (*Philosophical Chaucer*, 111–51; esp. 111–14).

7. II.pr.2.8–9; 24.

8. Boece II.pr.2.70–72. Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, 409–10.

9. D. Vance Smith, *Arts of Possession* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 193.

10. Description based on that of David M. Robinson, "The Wheel of Fortune," *Classical Philology* 41 (October 1946): 207–16, esp. 207.

11. Plato touches upon the transmigration of souls in several of his writings; those I have relied on for my synopsis are *Laus* X.903d–904e; *Phaedo* 80–83; *Phaedrus* 245c–e, 248–49; *Republic* X.617–18. Quotation from *Laus* X.903d, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 1560. Related to this notion of the changefulness of the incorporated soul is Aristotle's idea that material things themselves are ceaselessly changing—or exchanging—from one state to another, and that it is only our *perception* that designates the difference between "coming to be" and "passing away." See Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, 318a–b, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 519–20.

12. *Phaedo* 81e; in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 71.

13. J. Walsh, trans., *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), xxvii.

14. For an enlightening discussion of how this Hegelian theory of "objectification" connects to material culture, see Miller, *Materiality*, 8–9.

15. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, book 7, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–60*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: Norton, 1992), 101–14, esp. 110. Žižek discusses the death drive throughout *The Ticklish Subject* (New York: Verso, 1999), esp. 65–66, 172, 289–94.

16. Stephen J. Gould, "An Asian Approach to the Understanding of Consumer Energy, Drives and States," *Research in Consumer Behavior* 5 (1991): 33–59.

17. I.m.1.17–18; 3.

18. II.m.2.13–20; 25.

19. III.m.2.24–28; 46.

20. IV.m.1. The Platonic cycle of the soul makes various appearances in Boethius's text, usually through Plato's doctrine of recollection or *anamnesis*, in which the soul contains all knowledge before birth but forgets it with the acquisition of the physical body. The protagonist also clearly associates his own physical process of aging with Fortune's ceaseless change. See III.pr.2; III.m.11; III.pr.12; IV.m.1.

21. For an informative article elucidating those exceptions, see Alexander Alexakis, "Was There Life Beyond the Life Beyond? Byzantine Ideas on Reincarnation and Final Restoration," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 155–77.
22. On the wheel of life as a "variant" of the wheel of Fortune, see Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 144.
23. Morton W. Bloomfield, *Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100–1500 A.D.* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1979), 103, 199, 307; Patch, 173. One late-medieval version of Boethian instruction, Petrarch's popular 1366 self-help manual *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae* (translated as "The Remedies of Fortune Fair and Foul"), in which everything from fine bodies to fine furniture is offered up as an example of the never-ending battle between virtuous actions and Fortune's corrupting gifts, makes explicit the connection between the image of the turning wheel and the human passions. Citing Walter Map's discussion of Ixion's fiery wheel of lust, Petrarch concludes, "we all have our Ixions." Conrad H. Rawski, *Petrarch's Remedies of Fortune Fair and Foul: A Modern English Translation of De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae, with a Commentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 26. See also *A Dialogue Between Reason and Adversity: A Late Middle English Version of Petrarch's 'De Remediis'*, ed. F. N. M. Diekstra (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968).
24. *Menippus*, in *Lucian*, ed. and trans. A. M. Harmon, K. Kilburn, and M. D. MacLeod, vol. 4 (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1913–67), 99–101. For Boethius's use of Lucian in Book II of the *Consolatio*, see Payne, esp. 38–54, 58–62.
25. Lucian, *Menippus*, 99.
26. "For a brief space [Fortune] lets them use their costumes, but when the time of the pageant is over, each gives back the properties and lays off the costume along with his body, becoming what he was before his birth, no different from his neighbor" (Lucian, *Menippus*, 99).
27. As Menippus says right before this quotation: "So, with so many skeletons lying together, all alike staring horridly and vacuously and baring their teeth, I questioned myself how I could distinguish Thersites from handsome Nireas, or the mendicant Irus from the king of the Phaeacians, or the cook Pyrrhias from Agamemnon; for none of their former means of identification abode with them, but their bones were all alike, undefined, unlabelled, and unable ever again to be distinguished by anyone" (Lucian, *Menippus*, 99).
28. II.pr.2.4–5; 23.
29. *The Holy Bible, Translated from the Latin Vulgate . . . at Douay A.D. 1609 . . . at Rheims, A.D. 1582*, ed. Richard Challoner (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1989). The Vulgate reads "nudus egressus sum de utero matris meae et nudus revertar illuc Dominus dedit Dominus abstulit." *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatum versionem*, ed. Robert Weber et al., 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994). On the connection to Job, see Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 99–100; Relihan, esp. 12–14, 40–41; and Astell's book-length work on the subject. Boethius's ambiguous use of scriptural allusions in this text has been a somewhat contentious critical topic, as discussed by Lerer in his review of Astell's book, *Job, Boethius, and Epic Truth*, in *Speculum* 70 (1995): 869–71.
30. Marcia Colish, "Cosmetic Theology: The Transformation of a Stoic Theme," *As-says* 1 (1981): 3–14. Bloch, 37–64.

31. For an instructive synopsis of clothing trends and terms in the late-antique period, see *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, by Glen Warren Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 381–82. See also Larissa Bonfante, “Introduction,” in Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante, *The World of Roman Costume* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 3–12; on the late-antique magnification of the importance of clothing, see 6.

32. For a recent article on the importance of the toga to Roman identity, see Shelley Stone, “The Toga: From National to Ceremonial Costume,” in Sebesta and Bonfante, 13–45.

33. My discussion here relies on Bourdieu’s section “The Dialectic of Objectification and Embodiment,” in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 87–95.

34. Bourdieu, “Dialectic,” 91. Bourdieu explicitly sees this process as cyclical: “The mind is a metaphor of the world of objects which is itself but an endless circle of mutually reflecting metaphors” (91).

35. Bourdieu, “Dialectic,” 94, 86. Italics are Bourdieu’s.

36. “The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit” (Bourdieu, “Dialectic,” 94).

37. Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 85–108; quotation 5; Bill Brown, ed., *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 122; McCracken, esp. 130–37.

38. McCracken, 132.

39. Bourdieu, “Dialectic,” 87. Bourdieu also seems to conjure the trope of Fortune when he describes a person’s class status as “his rising or falling trajectory” (87).

40. Bruce Holsinger has recently brought to light Bourdieu’s reliance on the medieval scholarship of Panofsky in his early formulations of *habitus*. It seems important to point out the role Boethius’s texts had in this chain of borrowing. Aquinas’s understanding of the term, which Panofsky later studies, relied in turn on Boethius’s translations and commentaries of Aristotle, the very cornerstone of that medieval scholasticism recycled by later theorists. Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 94–151; esp. 107ff. For a useful general discussion of Boethius’s influence on medieval thinkers, see Marenbon, 164–82. For Aquinas’s specific use of Boethius, see Ralph McInerny, *Boethius and Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990). On the historical notion of the *habitus*, see Bourdieu, “The Genesis of the Concepts of Habitus and Field,” trans. C. Newman, *Sociocriticism* 2 (December 1985): 11–24; and Charles Camic, “The Matter of Habit,” *American Journal of Sociology* 91 (March 1986): 1039–87.

41. On the importance of “things” as an emerging concept in Aristotle’s text, see Wolfgang-Rainer Mann, *The Discovery of Things: Aristotle’s Categories and Their Context* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). As part of his larger philosophical project, Boethius translated both Aristotle’s *Categories* and Porphyry’s commentary on that text, the *Isagoge*, as well as writing one (maybe two) commentaries on the *Categories* and two commentaries on the *Isagoge*. On the importance of these texts, see Chadwick, *Boethius*, 131–50; Marenbon, 19–32, 165–68; and Monika Asztalos, “Boethius as a Transmitter of Greek Logic to the Latin West: The Categories,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 95 (1993): 367–407.

42. *PL* 64:293A. All quotations of Boethius's Latin translation are from *PL* 64:293A–94C. For the sake of clarity I will refer to the category as “habitus.”

43. I.pr.4.4; 10. I have altered Green's translation slightly here to emphasize the dual meaning of the term in question.

44. II.pr.1.2; 21. More literally, *affectu desiderioque* might be understood as describing the damage or alteration within Boethius's self and the subsequent longing for what is lost.

45. “In quibus quoniam quaedam nostri habitus uestigia uidebantur, meos esse familiares imprudentia rata nonnullos eorum profanae multitudinis errore peruerit” (I.pr.3.8) [Then, when traces of my garments were seen on some of them, they were rashly thought to be my friends, and they were therefore condemned by the error of the profane mob (8)].

46. V.pr.4.25; 110.

47. I.pr.1.3–5; Watts, 35–36.

48. The tension between Philosophy's sartorial symbols of wisdom and their material corruption also testifies to her vital role as a purveyor of a more abstract lost knowledge and memory. Rather than embody the whole of Platonic wisdom, Philosophy embodies the Platonic philosophy that Boethius and others have abandoned in the face of more immediate worldly concerns. This point is underscored by the widespread theme of loss and emptiness throughout Philosophy's teachings in the *Consolatio*; as Lerer puts it, images of loss, “be they of purpose, direction, or meaning, permeate the book, from Philosophy's opening arguments on happiness, to the final poem on Orpheus's loss of Eurydice” (*Boethius and Dialogue*, 126).

49. Walsh suggests that the trope of philosophy as a seamless robe torn by clashing sects can be found as early as Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (second century) (116n3). I have been unable to find this exact reference, although Martyr does discuss the diversification of Philosophy by various sects in chapter 2 of that text, and, as I mention in my introduction, he discusses the philosopher's *pallium* in chapter 1. See J. C. M. Van Winden, *An Early Christian Philosopher: Justin Martyr's 'Dialogue with Trypho' Chapters One to Nine, Introduction, Text and Commentary* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1971), esp. commentary on 22–23, 27; and Thomas B. Falls, *Saint Justin Martyr* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), esp. 147n2. For a more extended discussion of the possible sources of Philosophy's description, see Joachim Gruber, “Die Erscheinung der Philosophie in der *Consolatio Philosophiae* des Boethius,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 112 (1969): 166–86, his textual commentary on Philosophy in his *Kommentar*; and Courcelle, 17–28. Related to the allegory of Philosophy's torn garment is the image of the entire world as text and object of inevitably flawed hermeneutics, for which, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), 319–26. Lerer's valuable discussion of the particular linguistic and textualized aspects of Philosophy's dress also relates in interesting ways to its material functionality (*Boethius and Dialogue*, 96–110, esp. 98–99).

50. Bill Brown, 4.

51. I.pr.2.6; Watts, 38.

52. James J. Paxson, for example, describes the personification as a “phenomenological foil to the narratorial human consciousness.” Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 13. In a related matter, Paxson makes a

tentative connection between the use of personifications and the notion of Nominalism in his discussion of Anima in *Piers Plowman* (137–38). See also Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1964), 26–35; and, in a different tradition, the role of allegorical tropes in theoretical discussions about the phenomenology of signification by Walter Benjamin and Paul de Man. See Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977), 233; de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 142. A good synopsis of these ideas can be found in Tom Cohen, J. Hillis Miller, and Barbara Cohen, “A ‘Materiality without Matter’?” in *Material Events: Paul de Man and the Afterlife of Theory*, ed. Tom Cohen, Barbara Cohen, J. Hillis Miller, and Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), vi–xxv. I have also discussed elsewhere Philosophy’s connection to the inextricably intertwined and gendered notions of mind and matter, of philosophical and sexual “secrets,” in late-antique and medieval representations of female personifications. See my article “How Philosophy Matters: Sex, Death, Clothes, & Boethius,” in *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings*, ed. E. Jane Burns (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 273–94.

53. l.ii.20; Stahl, 87. *Opera quae supersunt*, ed. Ludwig von Jan (Quedlinburg: Gottfried Bass, 1852), 23.

54. Joel Fineman, “The Structure of Allegorical Desire,” in *Allegory and Representation*, ed. Stephen J. Greenblatt (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 26–60, at 45.

55. Daniel Tiffany, *Toy Medium: Materialism and the Modern Lyric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 63–94, esp. 73, 81, 92. Tiffany relies on other theorists here: Baudelaire, Benjamin, Bellmer. In Lacanian terms, the automaton is the “screen object” whose materiality simultaneously deflects and reveals the traumatic loss at the heart of the subject (82).

56. See Chadwick, “Theta on Philosophy’s Dress in Boethius,” *Medium Aevum* 49, no. 2 (1980): 175–79; and Chadwick, *Boethius*, 225.

57. Harriet I. Flower, *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), esp. 32–59. See also O’Donnell’s notes to *Consolatio* 1.p.1.

58. In this sense she works as the specular device-as-screen object that Tiffany discusses (82).

59. Boethius delves into the image of the dramatic masks when elucidating the substance and definition of “person” as a category in his theological tractates. Boethius, “Contra Eutychen et Nestorium” [A Treatise Against Eutyches and Nestorius], in *The Theological Tractates. The Consolation of Philosophy*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 85–87.

60. On the embroidered purple garments of Roman magistrates and emperors, see R. Turner Wilcox, *The Mode in Costume* (New York: Scribner’s, 1958), 19; and Sebesta and Bonfante, 13, 39, 46, 70–91. The ornamented garment also conflicts with the asceticism that Plato espoused for all guardians of the state in his *Republic*, in which he states that it would be unlawful for such guardians to own any possessions or to touch, drink from, or ornament themselves in gold or silver (*Republic* III.417a; Cooper, 1052). On Socrates’ single garment, see Plato’s *Symposium*, 220b; Cooper, 501.

61. *Xenophon: Memorabilia*, trans. E. C. Marchant and O. J. Todd, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), I.VI.3. Jacques Soulillou has recently discussed the link between ornament and freedom, stating that throughout human history ornament has manifested the fundamental opposition “between a free man (*eleutheros*) and he who is not.” Soulillou, “Ornament and Order,” trans. Mark Heffernan, in *Crime and Ornament: The Arts and Popular Culture in the Shadow of Adolf Loos*, ed. Bernie Miller and Melony Ward (Toronto, ON: YYZ Books, 2002), 87–100, at 93.

62. Plato, *Phaedo*, 114E; Cooper, 97.

63. The entire passage uses the metaphor of enslavement to describe Boethius’s process of attachment prior to his fall: “Humanas uero animas liberiores quidem esse necesse est cum se in mentis diuinae speculatione conseruant, minus uero cum dilabuntur ad corpora, minusque etiam cum terrenis artubus colligantur. Extrema uero est seruitus cum uitii deditae rationis propriae possessione ceciderunt. Nam ubi oculos a summae luce ueritatis ad inferiora et tenebrosa deiecerint, mox inscitiae nube caligant, perniciosius turbantur affectibus, quibus accedendo consentiendoque quam inuexere sibi adiuuant seruitutem et sunt quodam modo propria libertate captivae” (V.pr.2.8–10). [Human souls, however, are more free while they are engaged in contemplation of the divine mind, and less free when they are joined to bodies, and still less free when they are bound by earthly fetters. They are in utter slavery when they lose possession of their reason and give themselves wholly to vice. For when they turn away their eyes from the light of supreme truth to mean and dark things, they are blinded by a cloud of ignorance and obsessed by vicious passions. By yielding and consenting to these passions, they worsen the slavery to which they have brought themselves and are, as it were, the captives of their own freedom (104).] The process of enslavement is also described in depth in V.pr.1.

64. II.pr.6.6–7; 35.

65. II.pr.5.24–26; 32.

66. II.pr.5.13–14; 30. I have altered Green’s translation to adhere to the interrogatory format of the original.

67. Colish, 3–14; Bloch, 37–64.

68. Colish, 3–14.

69. II.pr.5.17; Watts, 66. As I discuss in chapter 2, pp. 58–59, Boethius’s phrasing in this passage appears to be one of the sources for the pervasive discourse of *varietas vestium* in late-medieval English culture.

70. While Plato argued against the notion of private property in favor of communal ownership, for example, Aristotle argued for private property in part on the grounds that human nature thrives on the equalization of desire, rather than of wealth. Cicero and Seneca also engaged the ethics of private property in relation to equality, justice, and communal ownership; both described private property in Stoic terms as countering the common law of nature because it goes beyond mere necessity. On Augustine in particular, see Richard Schlatter, *Private Property: The History of an Idea* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1951), 37–38. See also James O. Grunebaum, *Private Ownership* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), esp. 25–46; and Schlatter, esp. 21–26.

71. Justinian *Institutes* 1.2.11. *The Institutes of Justinian*, ed. and trans. Thomas Cooper (Philadelphia: P. Byrne, 1812). See also Schlatter’s discussion, 21–32.

72. On the early Christian appropriation of these ideas, see Schlatter 26, 33–46.

73. Tertullian, *De Cultu Foeminarum*, PL 1:1332B. “On the Apparel of Women,” in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers*, 25. On Tertullian’s particular interest in clothing and fashion, see Bloch, 43, and Sebesta and Bonfante, 6. While the majority of Tertullian’s text discusses female attire, he does specifically address men’s attire in this text in chapter VIII.

74. PL 1:1312B; “On the Apparel of Women,” 17.

75. In this text Tertullian links all ornament to the fallen angels who, according to the (apocryphal) Book of Enoch, taught mortals the arts of metallurgy, among other “curious” arts. People who ornament themselves are refuting God’s artifice:

Displicet nimirum illis plastica Dei, in ipsis redarguunt reprehendunt artificem omnium. Reprehendunt enim, cum emendant, cum adjiciunt, utique ab adversario artifice sumentes additamenta ista, id est, diabolo. Nam quis corpus mutare monstraret, nisi qui hominis spiritum militia transfiguravit? (PL 1:1321A–B)

[To them, I suppose, the plastic skill of God is displeasing! In their own persons, I suppose, they convict, they censure, the Artificer of all things. For censure they do when they amend, when they add to (His work); taking these their additions, of course, from the adversary artificer. That adversary artificer is the devil. For who would show the way to change the *body*, but he who by wickedness transfigured man’s *spirit*? (20–21)]

76. Philosophy most directly explains the relationship between the ever-changing world and divine stasis in V.pr.6.

77. Fletcher, 108–13; esp. 110.

78. Fletcher, 113. Fletcher also points out that the word *kosmos* (ornament) was sometimes used for the word *magistrate*, to indicate the lawmaker who lays down the system of universal order (112).

79. II.pr.4; 29. Philosophy makes it clear elsewhere that what is truly “one’s own” encompasses that which cannot be lost or taken from a person by force; that which cannot be *changed* by material circumstances (III.pr.3–m.3).

80. II.pr.8.4; 40. Philosophy returns to this subject near the end of the *Consolatio*, arguing that all fortune is beneficial because the wise man’s struggle with both good and bad fortune strengthens and substantiates his wisdom (IV.pr.7). On how this idea gets picked up by Aquinas, see John R. Bowlin, *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas’s Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 167–212.

81. This trope of the restrictive garment may be related to an earlier sartorial practice outlined in traditional rules of self-control for the Greek orator, in which the arms of the speaker were literally bound up in his mantle so that he could not gesticulate. Paul Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 44–50.

82. Lerer makes this argument in his final chapter of *Boethius and Dialogue*, “A New Beginning,” 203–36; esp. 231–36.

83. Lerer describes Boethius’s shift to prose as emphasizing “the non-dialectical and purely philosophical structure of his concluding argument” (*Boethius and Dialogue*, 231).

84. III.m.12.34–39; 74.

85. Boethius, *De Institutione Musica*, ed. Godofredus Friedlein (Frankfurt: Minerva,

1966), I.64; trans. Calvin M. Bower, ed. Claude V. Palisca, as *Fundamentals of Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

86. III.m.12.49–58; Watts, 114–15. For this meter I prefer Watt's verse translation to Green's prose.

87. See, for example, III.m.2.

88. For example, Marenbon's and Relihan's joint understanding of the contradictory, inadequate elements of Philosophy's final arguments differs significantly from Lerer's understanding of the conclusion as a methodologically and structurally sound turn toward God. See for example Marenbon, 145; Relihan, 17; Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue*, 236.

CHAPTER TWO

1. I.pr.4.18–19; Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, 401.

2. For an astute summary of some of these aspects, see Tony Hunt, "The Christianization of Fortune," *Nottingham French Studies* 38 (Autumn 1999): 95–113; 101–2. For a broader outlook on the medieval translation and reception of Boethius, see Courcelle, 29–66; *The Medieval Boethius: Studies in the Vernacular Translations of "De Consolatione Philosophiae"*, ed. A. J. Minnis (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1987); *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin and Vernacular Traditions of the "Consolatio Philosophiae"*, ed. Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen and Lodi Nauta (New York: Brill, 1997); and Kaylor and Phillips, 53–169. More specialized studies include Dwyer, *Boethian Fictions*; Tim William Machan, *Techniques of Translation: Chaucer's Boece* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1985); and the extensive work by Minnis, including "Aspects of the Medieval French and English Traditions of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae*," in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret Gibson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 312–61, esp. 312–15; "Updated Approaches to the Classics: William of Aragon, Nicholas Trevet, Giovanni del Virgilio, and Pierre Bersuire," in Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary*, 314–72; and "'Glosynge is a glorious thyng': Chaucer at Work on the *Boece*," in *Medieval Boethius*, ed. Minnis, 106–24.

3. The exception seems to be Dante and his contemporaries: as Patch mentions briefly (19), and as Tony Hunt discusses more thoroughly ("The Christianization of Fortune," 104–13), a significant change occurred in the early fourteenth century in Dante's *Commedia* and in the French *Roman de Fauvel*, two texts that simultaneously take into account Boethius's entire representation of Fortune as both controller of worldly goods and part of divine providence—that is, they bring together both Book II and Books IV–V of the *Consolatio*, rather than just the former. Hunt does not follow this argument later into the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. An exception in this period is Chaucer's short Boethian poem "Fortune," which I discuss in chapter 2, and which in its final stanza seems to take up the Dantean version of Fortune by stating that blind and lewd people merely "call" Fortune what is in fact God's majesty (65–68).

4. Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), quotation 1. Judson Boyce Allen also makes the crucial point that their roles as teachers of preachers underscores these commentators' powerful influence over the learning that "shaped the popular mind" of the fourteenth century (6), and that a general "broadening of taste" (46) transformed the narrative content of preaching exempla by which the *auctores* entered the mainstream of religious and popu-

lar discourse. See *The Friar as Critic: Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), 43–46. Dwyer likewise discusses vernacular culture's claiming of Boethius for itself through its transforming of the text into a "palliative of fables" (8).

5. As Derek Pearsall puts it, "The paradox of Boethius's influence upon the Middle Ages . . . is that the illusions of Fortune's power that Philosophy so authoritatively dispels proved more potent and resilient as images than the rational arguments demonstrating their non-existence." *The Canterbury Tales* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 281.

6. I discuss most of these meanings in detail in my previous chapter.

7. See especially the studies on Fortune by Patch, Scanlon, Fradenburg, and Nolan cited in my previous chapter. Nolan describes the fashionability of Fortune as a topic, stating (in summary of a sentence from Gower's *Vox Clamantis*) that "there seems to have been a fashion for Fortune in the later fourteenth century" ("The Fortunes of Piers Plowman and Its Readers," 2). This sense of narrative novelty accompanying literary discourses about Fortune in this period might in fact have been further highlighted by the trope of novelty that Fortune's fashionable figure performs.

8. *Pseudo-Boèce, De disciplina scholarium*, ed. Olga Weijers (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976); Edda Ducci, *Un saggio de pedagogia medievale: Il "De disciplina scholarium" dello Pseudo-Boezio* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1967). An outline of the text is given by Eva Matthews Sanford, "De Disciplina Scholarium: A Mediaeval Handbook on the Care and Training of Scholars," *The Classical Journal* 28 (November 1932): 82–95.

9. On the popularity of the text, which exists in 136 manuscripts and thirty-two commentaries, see Weijers, 30; and Arpad Steiner, "The Authorship of *De disciplina scholarium*," *Speculum* 12 (January 1937): 81–84, esp. 81.

10. H. F. Sebastian, "William Wheteley's Commentary on the Pseudo-Boethius Tractate *De disciplina scholarium* and Medieval Grammar School Education" (unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1970); A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 3:2030–31. On the strong possibility that the author of the *De disciplina* was an Englishman, see Steiner, 82–84.

11. II.m.5.1–3; translation based on Watts, 68, with a slight adjustment to line 3 for continuity.

12. I quote Trevet's commentary from an unpublished edition that I have consulted on microfilm by E. T. Silk, *Nicholas Trevet on Boethius. Expositio Fratris Nicolai Treveti Anglici Ordinis Predicatorum super Boecio De Consolacione*, 253. Portions of Trevet's text, including the entirety of his commentary on II.m.5, have been translated by Minnis and Scott in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c.1100–1375: The Commentary Tradition*, revised edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 336–37. My translation here very closely follows that of Minnis and Scott, p. 337. On the popularity of Trevet's text see Lodi Nauta, "The Scholastic Context of Trevet's Commentary," in Hoenen and Nauta, 41.

13. *OED*, s.v. "luxury." Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 59, 65, 69. Bloomfield describes a more specific link between Boethius and the seven deadly sins in the tenth-century Provençal "Boethius Poem," which he cites as one of the earliest

references to the seven sins in vernacular literature (Bloomfield, 120). Trevet's mention of both sloth and cupidity as well as *luxuria* in his own commentary on II.m.5 suggests an associative connection between the two in later literature as well.

14. On this twofold connotation of luxury, see Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and Their Posterity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 207–11.

15. Jean de Meun uses the phrase “Il ne se destruient pas par outrage” to translate the Latin original (*Nec inertī perdita luxu*) in his translation of Boethius's text. Likewise, in his section in the *Roman de la Rose* Jean incorporates a summary of II.m.5 into the larger discussion of *Ami* (Friend) about greedy wives who desire full purses and the most fashionable garments (*Roman de la Rose*, 8355–545). Chaucer uses the same Middle English word, “outrage,” in his treatment of II.m.5 in the *Boece*, which relied heavily on both Jean's translation and Trevet's commentary: “They ne destroyeden ne desseyvede nat himself with outrage” (II.m.5.3–4; Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, 415). Subsequently, in his short poem “Former Age,” which is based on II.m.5, he translates the phrase as “They ne were nat forpampred [overindulged] with outrage” (5). For a helpful table that compares the Latin, French, and English versions of Boethius's II.m.5, see Kate O. Petersen, “Chaucer and Trivet,” *PMLA* 18.2 (1903): 173–93; table is in the Appendix, 190–93.

16. *De disciplina scholarium*, PL 64:1233D–38D; quotation 1228B. The text also describes a specific form of concupiscence that “gapes in wonder” at personal ornament, “concupiscentia quae ornatibus inhiat” (PL 64:1228B).

17. *De disciplina scholarium*. PL 64:1228C.

18. II.pr.5.17; Watts, 66.

19. Galloway, “Latin England,” 59–65. I discuss in more detail Galloway's scholarship on the concept of *varietas vestium* in my introduction, p. 11.

20. This shift toward a more positive cultural understanding of Fortune has recently been discussed in two important studies. Paul Strohm opens his latest monograph by pointing to a new approach in fifteenth-century texts, “a revised, more hopeful view of the individual's relation to Fortune” that, he suggests, marks a “pre-Machiavellian moment.” In *Politique: Languages of Statecraft between Chaucer and Shakespeare* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 1. J. Allan Mitchell maps this shift in perspective more meticulously in his fascinating recent study of Fortune, *Ethics and Eventfulness in Middle English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

21. Murray, *Reason and Society*, 98–101; quotation 100. By comparison, Tony Hunt's study, “The Christianization of Fortune,” strives to historicize Fortune's reception in the early fourteenth century.

22. Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*. While Heller addresses fashion as a system throughout her book, her first chapter, “The *Sine qua non* of a Fashion System,” most rigorously engages the main features of the concept (15–45). Chapter 3, “Desire for Novelty and Unique Expression,” discusses the important role that desire for novelty and distinction play in the process (61–94).

23. Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*, 8–9.

24. Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*, 9, criterion 4; Lipovetsky, 29.

25. *Anticlaudianus*. PL 210:560A, section VIII.45–47; PL 210:561B–C, section VIII.114–15. Trans. James J. Sheridan, *Anticlaudianus or The Good and Perfect Man* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973), 190, 193. As I discuss in my

previous chapter, Boethius does not use the term *toga* or any other distinctive lexis for garments in his culture, preferring instead to use a series of generic words.

26. Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, Tome II, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: Champion, 1970), 187–88; 11. 6089–108; 6115–34. Trans. Frances Horgan, *The Romance of the Rose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 94.

27. Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*, 9.

28. Lipovetsky, 29. Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 27–49; quotation 32. For a different reading of the self-gaze depicted in this passage, see Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces: The "Roman de la Rose" and the Poetics of Contingency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 88–89.

29. This original meaning of the word still exists in today's usage, but it is not the principal meaning of the word. *OED*, s.v. "disguise" (v.) 1–4. For the word's usage in medieval French and English, see *MED*, s.v., "disgisen" (v.): "1. (a) To dress (sb., one-self) in newfangled, elaborate, or showy attire; deck out; (b) to fashion (attire) in a newfangled or elaborate way." Sponsler's important discussion of this word in sumptuary discourses primarily focuses on its secondary sense of concealment. *Drama and Resistance*, 9–10. In a related point, Heller-Roazen's discussion about Fortune as a figure for "self-differentiation" seems to correspond to this sense of *desguiser*; as he states, Jean's Fortune can be identified through the language of thirteenth-century philosophy as "the cipher of what takes place not as itself but as something different" (86, 85).

30. Heller, "Limiting Yardage and Changes of Clothes: Sumptuary Legislation in Thirteenth-Century France, Languedoc, and Italy," in Burns, *Medieval Fabrications*, 121–36, quotation 127. Heller also discusses these laws and the importance of "changes of clothes" in *Fashion in Medieval France*, 64–66; and she discusses the overlapping concerns of the *Roman de la Rose* and thirteenth-century sumptuary laws in "Anxiety, Hierarchy, and Appearance in Thirteenth-Century Sumptuary Laws and the Romance of the Rose," *French Historical Studies* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 311–48.

31. Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, 20.

32. Lecoy, 128–29; lines 20907–19; 20922–27. Horgan, 323.

33. On Pygmalion's lady see Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, 47, 84, 181–82, 208; and Heller, "Fashioning a Woman: The Vernacular Pygmalion in the *Roman de la Rose*," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 27 (2000): 1–18.

34. Quotation from Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages*. See also the seminal studies by Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300–1500* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948); Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life 1400–1800*, trans. Miriam Kochan (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Joel Kaye, *Economy and Nature in the Fourteenth Century: Money, Market Exchange, and the Emergence of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and the latest in a series of studies on the subject by Dyer, called *An Age of Transition?*

35. Aage Brusendorff, *The Chaucer Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), 199–200. On this critical discussion, see Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, 1084.

36. On the feudal theory of dominion, see Schlatter, 64.

37. On the critical interpretations of this title, see Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, 1084.

38. 37 Edward III; *SR* 1:381.

39. On the contemporary sense of this word, see *MED*, s.v. "manere," 2e.
40. 37 Edward III; *SR* 1:381.
41. "Former Age," lines 17–18. Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, 650–51.
42. Baldwin, 60.
43. Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, 23.
44. 37 Edward III; *SR* 1:380.
45. *MED*, s.v. "colour"; "peinture" 1d. Chaucer borrows this trope from Guillaume de Machaut; see James I. Wimsatt, "Chaucer, Fortune, and Machaut's 'Il m'est avis,'" in *Chaucerian Problems and Perspectives. Essays Presented to Paul E. Beichner*, ed. Edward Vasta and Zacharias Thundy (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 122–24. On Machaut's use of Boethius more generally, see Sarah Kay, *The Place of Thought: The Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 95–122, 176.
46. "Et uocat hanc tincturam uenenum quia sicut corpora nigrescunt ueneno sic illa purpura nigro conchiliorum sanguine tingitur" (Silk, 254) ["[Boethius] calls this dye poison," says Trevet, "because, just as poison turns bodies black, so purple cloth is dyed by the black blood of the shellfish" (Minnis and Scott, 337)].
47. O. Purdon, "Chaucer's Use of Woad in The Former Age," *Papers on Language and Literature* 25 (1989): 216–19. Andrew Scott Galloway, "Chaucer's Former Age and the Fourteenth-Century Anthropology of Craft: The Social Logic of a Premodernist Lyric," *ELH* 63, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 535–54.
48. *MED*, s.v. "monstre." Wimsatt, 123.
49. This mirror that can differentiate friend from foe reappears in Chaucer's work among the marvelous objects of the *Squire's Tale*, a tale that rests implicitly in the inextricable tangle (or "knotte" [*CT* 5.401], the Squire might say) between the novelty of objects and the rhetorical and sartorial ornament of a human subject (*CT* 5.132–36).
50. Wimsatt, 123.
51. Bloch, 37–74.
52. On the scholarly attribution of this poem to Chaucer, see Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, 1089.
53. Guillaume de Machaut, *Le Livre dou Voir Dit (The Book of the True Poem)*, ed. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, trans. R. Barton Palmer (New York: Garland, 1998), 11. 5235–832.
54. See Boccaccio, *De Casibus*, VI.i. For an overview of this tradition, see Patch, 46–47. The tradition seems overtly indebted to Alain de Lille's description of Nature's dress as "kaleidoscopic in its various colors" in *De Planctu Naturae*, 4998–5002. See Alan of Lille, *Plaint of Nature*, trans. James J. Sheridan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980), 85.
55. Other good examples include Lydgate's *The Assembly of Gods: or, The Accord of Reason and Sensuality in the Fear of Death*, ed. Oscar Lovell Triggs. EETS, e.s. 69 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1896); repr. London: Oxford University Press, 1957, lines 316–22; and *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall and K. B. Locock. EETS e.s. 77, 83, 92. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1899–1904), lines 19473–78.
56. Piponnier and Mane, 70–76, esp. 71–73.
57. Piponnier and Mane, 70–76. As costume historian Mary G. Houston puts it, "[i]n the fifteenth century we are confronted with change and variation which almost

defy description." *Medieval Costume in England and France: The 13th, 14th, and 15th Centuries* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 139.

58. "Former Age," 17; Purdon, 216–19. For "gawdy grene" see *MED*, s.v. "grene."

59. According to the *OED*, the modern meaning emerges in the sixteenth century; *OED*, s.v. "gaudy"; "gaud" (n. 2.2). See also *MED*, s.v. "gaude" (n); "gaudi" (n); "gaudi" (adj).

60. Lydgate's poetic attention to matters of fashionable clothing caused him to be named by scribes and contemporaries as the author of some satirical poems now thought by critics to be spurious, such as the fifteenth-century Middle English poems "Treatise of Galaunt," and "Hood of Green," the latter of which parodies the extravagance of *au courant* items of attire by imagining green luxury attire adorning a horse. Lydgate's tireless editor and indexer Henry Noble MacCracken goes so far as to declare that the poet "delighted in fine array." *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken. 2 vols. EETS e.s. 107, o.s. 192. (London: Oxford University Press, 1911–34; repr. 1961), 1:xxxiii.

61. Michel Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth: A History of Stripes*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York: Washing Square Press, 2001), 17, 105n20.

62. Piponnier and Mane, 133–34. Chaucer himself received just such an outfit, including red and black hose, from Elizabeth de Burgh when he worked as a page in her household in 1357. See *Chaucer Life Records*, ed. Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 14.

63. Paul Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 57–74, 179–85; Frédérique Lachaud, "Liveries of Robes in England, c. 1200–c. 1330," *English Historical Review* 111 (1996): 279–98.

64. A group that included Alice Chaucer, Geoffrey Chaucer's granddaughter. For more details regarding Charles's prolonged captivity, see William Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and Their Keepers," in *Charles d'Orléans in England, 1415–1440*, ed. Mary-Jo Arn (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 27–45. Notably similar English descriptions of Fortune's attire include those in the *Morte Arthure* and James I's *Kingis Quair*. See comparisons made by Mary-Jo Arn in her edition *Fortunes Stabilnes: Charles of Orleans's English Book of Love* (New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1994), 513–15. All quotations of the text are taken from this edition.

65. Crane, 10–11, 62–64. Ironically, the son of his father's enemy, Philip the Good, also chose to wear only black after the assassination of his own father in 1419 (Piponnier and Mane, 73). Considering the circumstances, it is probable that Philip was imitating Charles.

66. Piponnier and Mane, 71–73. See also Michel Pastoureau, *Black: The History of a Color*, trans. Jody Gladding (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), esp. 45–112.

67. *MED*, s.v. "nice" (adj.)

68. Arn, 515.

69. Arn, 515–16. On the English love of dagged garments, see my article "Rips & Slits: Fashion and the Medieval Self," in *Clothing Culture 1300–1600*, 223–38.

70. On Charles's use of this trope, see Arn, 65–67.

71. A point also made by Arn, 65. For comparable manuscript depictions of Fortune, see Kurose, esp. plates 67–78.

72. I discuss in depth the related symbolism of dice and fashion in chapter 5.

73. This change in Fortune's appearance is discussed by Leslie Thomson, in *Fortune: "All Is But Fortune"* (Washington, DC: University of Washington Press for Folger Shakespeare Library, 2000), 17.

74. Spoken by "kingmaker" Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. *The Mirror for Magistrates: Edited from Original Texts in the Huntington Library*, ed. Lily B. Campbell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 205; lines 8–10. My gratitude to Lisa H. Cooper for directing me to this reference.

CHAPTER THREE

1. "Song Upon the Tailors," in Thomas Wright, *Political Songs of England* [PSE] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 51–56; quotation lines 15–18.

2. Timothy M. Thibodeau, "From Durand of Mende to St. Thomas More: Lessons Learned from Medieval Liturgy," in *Ritual, Text, and Law: Studies in Medieval Canon Law and Liturgy Presented to Roger E. Reynolds*, ed. Kathleen G. Cushing and Richard F. Gyug (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 83–94, at 84. All citations of Durand's text are from *Guillelmi Duranti Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, 3 vols., ed. A. Davril and T. M. Thibodeau (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995–2000). Four of the books of the *Rationale* have been translated into English. The Proem and Books 1–3 have recently been translated by Timothy M. Thibodeau, *The Rationale Divinorum Officiorum of William Durand of Mende: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and *William Durand On the Clergy and Their Vestments: A New Translation of Books 2–3 of the Rationale divinorum officiorum* (Chicago, IL: University of Scranton Press, 2010). Older translations of Book I and Book III have also recently been reprinted, along with a new translation of the Proem and Book IV by Rama Coomaraswamy, in *The Rationale Divinorum Officiorum: The Foundational Symbolism of the Early Church, Its Structure, Decoration, Sacraments, and Vestments, Books I, III, and IV* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2007). These reprinted translations are from *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the "Rationale Divinorum Officiorum,"* trans. John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb (Leeds: T. W. Green, 1843); and *Durand on the Sacred Vestments: An English Rendering of the Third Book of the "Rationale Divinorum Officiorum" of Durand, Bishop of Mende, A.D. 1287*, trans. T. H. Passmore (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1899). My citations refer to Thibodeau's Latin edition of the whole text and to his translations. I also cite Passmore's helpful notes in his earlier translation of Book III. Citations are to the Latin edition by page number, along with the respective translations by section number and page number.

3. As Anselm Davril puts it in his preamble to the Latin edition, the *Rationale* became for the study of medieval liturgy what Peter Lombard's *Sentences* became for theology (1:viii).

4. Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*, 2 vols. (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1986), 1:113. See also James F. White, "Durand and the Interpretation of Christian Worship," in *Contemporary Reflections on the Medieval Christian Tradition: Essays in Honor of Ray C. Petry*, ed. George H. Shriver (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1974), 41–52, at 45–46, who proposes that the

Rationale succeeded because it deployed some of the organizational advancements of the scholastics.

5. Thibodeau, "From Durand of Mende to St. Thomas More," 84.

6. Alexander Lawson, *Anatomy of a Typeface* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1990), 19–20.

7. Dyan Elliott, "Dressing and Undressing the Clergy: Rites of Ordination and Degradation," in Burns, *Medieval Fabrications*, 55–70, at 56. Elliott's reading of Durand's traditionalism in this article rests implicitly on the assumption that it depicts an already-stable set of conditions and beliefs, essentially depicting Church practices as they *were*, rather than as they should be (see esp. 56–57). By contrast, I argue that neither the clothes nor their symbolism were as "frozen in time" as Elliott implies, and that this lack of stability in fact causes a great deal of tension in Durand's text.

8. Elliott, 55.

9. While isolated examples of Church regulations did exist prior to the thirteenth century, the legislative energy that Innocent III put toward clothing regulation has been shown to mark the beginning of a more ambitious and pointed legislative program. See Cordelia Warr, "De Indumentis: The Importance of Religious Dress during the Papacy of Innocent III," in *Innocenzo III: Urbs et Orbis: Atti del Congresso Internazionale, Roma, 9–15 settembre 1998*, ed. Andrea Sommerlechner, 2 vols (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 2003), 1:489–502; See also *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils*, ed. H. J. Schroeder (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1937), 151, 199–200; and *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward, and Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:242–44. For an admirably succinct discussion of a similar escalation in thirteenth-century regulation of secular attire, see Heller, "Limiting Yardage and Changes of Clothes," esp. 123–25.

10. As Michael Camille states, the ape in medieval marginalia is "always a *signe*, a sign dissimulating something else." Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 30. Miri Rubin also discusses the manuscript representation of apes dressed as bishops in *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 346.

11. On the use of actual vestments in Renaissance theater, see Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," *Bulletin of the American Academy of the Arts and Sciences* 43 (1990): 11–34, at 11–12.

12. See Wharton B. Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum: The Origin and Gradual Development of the Dress of Holy Ministry in the Church* (London: Longman, Green, & Co., 1868).

13. See Tertullian, *De Pallium*, PL 2:1029C–50B; and my discussion above.

14. Jerome, *Against the Pelagians*, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Second Series. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Volume VI: St. Jerome Letters and Select Works. Book I, chapter 9 (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1893).

15. Innocent III, *De Missarum Mysterioris*, PL 217:773B–916A. See also Anko Ypen-ga, "Innocent III's *De Missarum Mysterioris* Reconsidered: A Case Study on the Allegorical Interpretation of Liturgy," in Sommerlechner, 1:323–39.

16. Durand, *Rationale*, Book I, Prohemium, 4–5.

17. Durand, *Rationale*, Book III, Prohemium, 177; trans. Thibodeau, Book III, Prologue 1.131.

18. Durand, *Rationale*, Book I, Prohemium, 10; trans. Thibodeau, Prologue, 6.

19. The Christian use of the *rationale* began in the early twelfth century and died out in the fourteenth. See R. A. S. Macalister, *Ecclesiastical Vestments: Their Development and History* (London: Eliot Stock, 1896), 110–12; Janet Mayo, *A History of Ecclesiastical Dress* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1984), 167. See also Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis*, s.v. “rationalis.” Earlier in the century, John of Garland describes the *rationale* as “an ornament of a bishop, called in another fashion ‘logion,’” and subsequently presents the description given in Exodus 28. *The Dictionarius of John de Garlande and the Author’s Commentary*, trans. Barbara Blatt Rubin (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1981), 66–69.

20. Durand, *Rationale*, Book I, Prohemium, 10; trans. Thibodeau, Prologue, 6.

21. Durand, *Rationale*, Book III, Prohemium, 179; trans. Thibodeau, Book III, Prologue 5.134–35.

22. Durand, *Rationale*, Book III, Prohemium, 179; trans. Thibodeau, Book III, Prologue 5.135.

23. Albertus Magnus, *De sacrificio missae (On the Sacrifice of the Mass)*, in *Albert the Great. Opera Omnia*, ed. A. Bourgnnet, 38 vols. (Paris: Ludovicum Vivès, 1890–95), 38:1–189. See also White, 46; and Jungmann, 1:113.

24. Durand, *Rationale*, Book III, Prohemium, 178–79; trans. Thibodeau, Book III, Prologue 3.132–33.

25. Elliott, 58; Durand, *Rationale*, Book III, Prohemium, 182.

26. The passages discussed in this paragraph can be found in Durand, *Rationale*, Book III, Prohemium, 181.

27. Elliott, 56.

28. Mayo, 45–46; Herbert Norris, *Church Vestments: Their Origin and Development* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1950), 168. Both the Council of Cologne, in 1260, and the canons of the Church of Liège, in 1287, stipulate the importance of the surplice. See Durand, trans., Passmore, 15–16n2.

29. All citations regarding the surplice can be found in Durand, *Rationale*, Book III, Prohemium, 182; trans. Thibodeau, Book III, Prologue 10–13, pp. 138–39.

30. E. Bishop, *Liturgica Historica: Papers on the Liturgy and Religious Life of the Western Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1918), 265, 267. The following discussion on copes relies on Mayo, 38–40, 47–49, 53–55; Houston, 30–31, 70–71; and Norris, *Church Vestments*, 157–60. In addition to the open episcopal cope and the *cappa clausa*, there were various forms of the garment in the Middle Ages, such as the *cappa nigra* or *cappa choralis* (a black cloth cope used by secular and regular clergy or as a choir cope), and *cappa magna* (worn by bishops and cardinals).

31. Houston, 30–32; quotation in Mayo, 55.

32. Mayo, 55.

33. According to Mayo, “in the Vatican inventory of 1295 *Opus Anglicanum* is mentioned 113 times” (50).

34. Mayo, 39, 48–49; Macalister, 164–65.

35. Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. Henry R. Luard, Rolls Series, 7 vols. (London: Longman, 1874), vol. 4.546. On the emergence of *Opus Anglicanum* in this period, see Donald King, ed., *Opus Anglicanum: English Medieval Embroidery* (London:

Arts Council, 1963). Published in conjunction with the exhibition shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum; A. G. I. Christie, *English Medieval Embroidery: A Survey of English Embroidery Dating from the Beginning of the Tenth Century until the end of the Fourteenth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938); Mayo, 50–52; Houston, 68–71. A more general example of the association of priest's attire with wealth can be found in John of Garland's *Dictionarius*, in which the author describes weavers of rich silk and gold cloth who "make the belts and headbands of rich women and the priests' stoles" (trans. Blatt, 71).

36. Macalister, 155–57, 161; Mayo, 51.

37. All citations of the passages on the cope can be found in Durand, *Rationale*, Book III, Prohemium, 182; trans. Thibodeau, Book III, Prologue 13.139–40.

38. Durand, *Rationale*, Book III, Prohemium, 182–83; trans. Thibodeau, Book III, Prologue 13.140. Biblical quotation from 1 Corinthians 13:12. I have substituted for the word *imperfecti* used in Davril and Thibodeau's edition the alternate wording of *perfecti* from Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 721, and Springfield, MA, City Library Associates, MS 091–D 93. See Davril and Thibodeau, *Rationale*, 183n.

39. Durand, *Rationale*, Book III, Prohemium, 183 and n.

40. Passmore points out that it was the Council of Toledo in 633, not the Council of Mayence, that enacted these canons (*Rationale*, 20n2).

41. Durand, *Rationale*, Prohemium, 6; trans. Thibodeau, Prologue, 3. Chapter 8 more strongly focuses on the relation of law to change: "Siquidem quantum ad moralia lex non recipit mutationem, sed quantum ad sacramentalia et cerimonialia mutata est quoad superficiem littere; mysticus tamen eorum intellectus mutatus non est, unde non dicitur lex mutata quamvis translato in nos sacerdotio sit translata." The biblical reference in the last line is to Hebrews 7:12: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."

42. *The Goliard Poets: Medieval Latin Songs and Satires*, ed. and trans. George F. Whicher (New York: New Directions, 1949), 1–6, 281; and A. G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066–1422* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 146–48. I have translated the key phrase *lex metamorphoseos* in line 18 of the poem as "law of metamorphosis" (rather than the plural *metamorphoses*, following Ovid's text) because of its Greek genitive singular form. On the common misperception among medieval thinkers that Ovid's title was meant to be singular rather than plural, see Edgar F. Shannon, "Chaucer's Metamorphoseos," *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 35, no. 5 (May, 1920): 288–91.

43. London, British Library, MS Harley 978, fol. 78v–79r. "Song Upon the Tailors" is published in Wright, *PSE*, 51–56. All citations and translations of this poem will be to this edition, with minor changes in translation for sense; I have also italicized the intermittent Anglo-Norman lines for easier recognition of structural and linguistic discrepancies. My gratitude to Lisa H. Cooper for first acquainting me with this curiously wonderful poem.

44. Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), esp. 83–99, 110–21. On the scribal hand of this section of the manuscript, see 99; on recent studies of the manuscript's musical content, see 235n12. For a basic description of the manuscript, see R. Nares and F. Douce, *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 4 vols. (London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1808–12), 1:488–89. More thorough descrip-

tions with more accurate folio numbers can be found in C. L. Kinsford, ed., *Song of Lewes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), vii–xviii; and Tony Hunt, *Popular Medicine in Thirteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), 101–4.

45. On Henry III's policy of royal absolutism and sacredness, see M. T. Clanchy, "Did Henry III Have a Policy?" *History* 53 (1968): 207–19; and *England and Its Rulers 1066–1272* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 158–65. For a counterargument, see D. A. Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 75–106. For background on the baron's war, I have found most helpful R. E. Treharne and I. J. Sanders, *Documents of the Baronial Movement of Reform and Rebellion 1258–1267* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); E. F. Jacob, *Studies in the Period of Baronial Reform and Rebellion, 1258–1267* (New York: Octagon Books, 1974); and J. R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

46. See W. R. Jones, "Bishops, Politics, and the Two Laws: The Gravamina of the English Clergy, 1237–1399," in *Speculum* 41, no. 2 (April 1966): 209–45; and Maurice Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), esp. 120, 456.

47. Maddicott, 229, 306. There were also several important councils at Reading in the thirteenth century, including the Great Council in 1219 and 1279. The *Annales of Dunstable* reports that Henry also called a parliament at Reading in 1263, but I can find no other evidence that such a parliament was held. See Margaret A. Hennings, *England under Henry III Illustrated from Contemporary Sources* (London: Longmans and Green, 1924), 109.

48. See Clanchy, *England and Its Rulers*, 163, 170, 200.

49. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1:1 (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916). Translation by A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 1.

50. On the importance of tailors and tailoring in this period, see Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*, 82–85, 157–64; Piponnier and Mane, 27–32.

51. *MED*, s.v. "taillour," and *OED*, s.v. "tailor." The earliest example in the *MED* is the word "tailorie," from 1230. On the development of the tailor profession in England, see M. P. Davies, *The Tailors of London and Their Guild: 1300–1500* (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Oxford, 1994).

52. See Curtius's discussion of this tradition generally and of God as a tailor specifically, 544–46. Later reactions to the tailors' link with divine creation become more provocative, such as the portrayal of the allegorical figure of Heresy as a tailor in Guillaume de Deguileville's (and later Lydgate's) *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, as well as William Dunbar's various poems about tailors, one of which imagines that the tailor and cobbler are knighted by the devil and made to joust one another, and another of which satirically imagines that the same artisans sit next to God in heaven because they can remake what God "mismakes": "The caus to yow is nocht unkend; / That God mismakkis, ye do amend / Be craft and grit agilitie: / Taylouris and sowtaris, blist be ye." "Of the Tailors and the Shoemakers," in *William Dunbar: The Complete Works* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), 168–70, lines 9–12. On the figure of Heresy as a tailor in Deguileville and Lydgate, see Lisa H. Cooper, "'Markys . . . off the workman': Heresy, Hagiography, and the Heavens in *The Pilgrimage Of The Life Of Man*," in Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown, eds., *Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth Century: Lydgate Matters* (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 89–111, at 101.

53. Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*, 8.

54. Niermeyer, s.v. "figura," I. See Erich Auerbach's essay, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays*, Theory and History of Literature, vol. 9 (New York: Meridian Books, 1959; repr. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), 11–78.

55. Niermeyer, s.v. "transmutare."

56. "Deus stetit in coetu Dei in medio Deus iudicat / usquequo iudicatis iniquitatem et facies impiorum suscipitis semper / iudicate pauperi et pupillo egeno et inopi iuste facite / salvate inopem et pauperem de manu impiorum liberate / non cognoscunt nec intellegunt in tenebris ambulant movebuntur omnia fundamenta terrae / *ego dixi dii estis* et filii Excelsi omnes vos / ergo quasi Adam moriemini et quasi unus de principibus cadetis / surge Domine iudica terram quoniam hereditabis omnes gentes." [God hath stood in the congregation of gods: and being in the midst of them he judgeth gods. / How long will you judge unjustly: and accept the persons of the wicked? / Judge for the needy and fatherless: do justice to the humble and the poor. / Rescue the poor; and deliver the needy out of the hand of the sinner. / They have not known nor understood: they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth shall be moved. / *I have said: You are gods* and all of you the sons of the most High. / But you like men shall die: and shall fall like one of the princes. / Arise, O God, judge thou the earth: for thou shalt inherit among all the nations (Psalm 81:1–8; italics mine)].

57. The theme of unprincipled, dissolute religious men warranting judgment can be found in other poems in Harley 978, most obviously in the poem immediately following "Song Upon the Tailors," which asks in its final stanza that fellow brothers "judge" an unnamed impudent priest [*sacerdos inpudicus*] who has inflicted various forms of his sinful appetites on the local people while pretending to minister to the needy; the final line outright commands judgment: "*Iudicate!*" London, British Library, MS Harley 978, fol. 79v. The poem, which begins "*Diues Eram Et Dilectus*" [Once I was rich and well content] has been attributed to the twelfth-century poet Hugo of Orleans, better known as Hugo Primas. See "Primas Lodges a Complaint," in Whicher, 90–101; quotation 101.

58. Canons 14–16 in particular deal with clerical excesses. See Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:242–44.

59. See Warr, "De Indumentis: The Importance of Religious Dress during the Papacy of Innocent III," in Sommerlechner, 1:489–502. See also Schroeder, 151, 199–200; and Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:242–44. This rise in legislation corresponds to the escalation of secular regulation in the thirteenth century discussed by Heller, "Limiting Yardage and Changes of Clothes," 123–25.

60. This is an idea explored in various ways by Miri Rubin in *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and by Margaret Pappano in her forthcoming book *The Priest's Body in Performance: Theatre and Religious Identity in Late Medieval England and France*.

61. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:236–37; quotation 236.

62. Powicke, 451, 455.

63. On the growing importance of the Eucharist and the feast of Corpus Christi in the Middle Ages, see Rubin, esp. 12–82, 164–212.

64. As regulation of the appearance and construction of gloves themselves in Lateran IV suggests, this ceremonial garment was susceptible to the vacillations of fashion.

See the proscription against “curiously sewed together gloves” in canon 16 of Lateran IV, as translated in Schroeder, 236–96.

65. Durand finishes this analogy by reading the Jacob/Christ figure as the second Adam: “Sane pellis edi similitudo est peccati quam Rebecca mater, id est Spiritus sancti gratia, manibus ueri Iacob, id est operibus Christi, circumdedit, ut similitudinem maioris, id est prioris Ade, secundus exprimeret” (Book III.208). [Fittingly, the goat skin is an image of sin, with which Rebecca, mother of Jacob—that is, with the grace of the Holy Spirit—covered the hands of the true Jacob—that is, with the works of Christ—so that he would resemble his elder, that is, the first Adam, He who became the second Adam (Thibodeau, Book 2.4.186)].

66. Durand, Book III.208; Thibodeau, Book 3.4.186.

67. As discussed by Mayo, 53. A more detailed description of the cope can be found in Houston, 30–31, 70–71; and Norris, 160.

68. Mayo, 46; also A. W. N. Pugin, *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume* (London: B. Smith, 1868).

69. London, British Library, MS Harley 978, fol. 84v. Wright, *PSE*, 27–36; quotations 32–33.

70. London, British Library, MS Harley 978, fol. 84v. Wright, *PSE*, 30.

71. London, British Library, MS Harley 978, fol. 84v. Wright, *PSE*, 31.

72. “quia frigore strides: / sed michi nulla fides, / nisi pelliculas clamidi des” [[Y]ou with cold are wheezing, / But till some fur is added / It’s little help you’ll get from me, unpadded” (Whicher, 80–83)]. The protective cloak was especially significant in the Madonna of Misericord tradition in which supplicants are depicted as literally sheltered beneath the Virgin’s cloak, which emerges in this period, especially among monastic orders. See James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols in Art* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1979), 325–26.

73. Augustine depicts his own relationship to clothing in terms similar to St. Martin. Upon being offered a costly cloak, he states: “It is not fitting: I ought to have such a garment as I can give to my brother if he has not one. Such a one as a priest can wear, such a one as a deacon can decently wear, and a subdeacon, such will I accept, because I accept it in common. If any one gives me a better one, I shall sell it, as indeed I am in the habit of doing: so that, when the garment itself cannot be common to all, at least the price of it can, I sell it and give it to the poor.” This passage is quoted and discussed in Percy Dearmer, *The Ornaments of the Ministers* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1920), 70. The Benedictine Rule also emphasizes this act of sartorial charity: “When the brethren receive new clothes, let them always return the old ones at once, that they may be stored in a clothes-room for the poor.” *The Rule of Saint Benedict. In Latin and English*, ed. and trans. Abbot Justin McCann (London: Burns Oats, 1952, 3rd printing, 1963), Rule 55, p. 125.

74. As a relic Saint Martin’s cloak became a revered symbol of charity in the Middle Ages, a famous national artifact preserved at the court of the Frankish kings, and even an emblem of Christian sanctuary: the building where his *capa* or *chape* was venerated came to be known as the *capella*, or *chapelle*—the etymological origin of the chapel. *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* VII.37.1; discussed in Passmore, 31n1.

75. See Sophia Menache, “Faith, Myth, and Politics: The Stereotype of the Jews and their Expulsion from England and France,” in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 75, no. 4 (April 1985): 351–74; and “Matthew Paris’s Attitudes toward Anglo-

Jewry,” in *Journal of Medieval History* 23, no. 2 (1997): 139–62; Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), esp. 9, 21, 45, 55–56, 78. On circumcision in Christian art, see B. Blumenkranz, *Le Juif médiéval au miroir de l’art Chrétien* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966), 77, 135.

76. The number of Jewish conversions to Christianity in England in the 1240s and 1250s increased (possibly as high as 10 percent of the Jewish population) in large part because of the depletion of Jewish wealth and self-sufficiency through unprecedented amounts of royal taxation. According to Robert C. Stacey, “[b]etween 1240 and 1255 Henry III collected more than £70,000 from English Jews, at a time when the king’s total annual cash revenues rarely exceeded £25,000”; these amounts swelled to even more enormous sums in the following years. Robert C. Stacey, “The Conversion of Jews to Christianity in Thirteenth-Century England,” *Speculum* 67, no. 2 (April 1992): 263–83, quotation 269–70.

77. Stacey, 272.

78. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:267. For discussion of a 1268 bull in which Pope Clement IV complained about converts reverting to Judaism, see *Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society*, ed. Michael Goodich (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 62.

79. Niermeyer, s.v. “cappa,” 5.

80. Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), esp. 2–3.

81. Exodus 31:18. Roth, 95–96.

82. Daniel Miller, “Materiality: An Introduction,” *Materiality*, 28.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Carolyn Dinshaw’s influential chapter “Griselda Translated” examines the tale through Jerome’s image of the allegorical text as veiled captive women, focusing primarily on the double valence of the Clerk’s *translatio* to both eliminate and restore the feminine. Dinshaw, *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 132–55. David Wallace, in his chapter “‘Whan She Translated Was’: Humanism, Tyranny, and the Petrarchan Academy,” explores the tale from a similar perspective of masculine rhetorical control over the female body, but his greater objective concerns the uses of this rhetoric to further the interests of tyrannical “Lumbardye.” Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 261–98. Although both of these studies, and especially Dinshaw’s, address the Clerk’s Tale’s emphasis on clothing, their interest lies primarily in the symbolism of the clothing as veiled allegorical woman (esp. Dinshaw, 144–48) and/or as masculine adornment and insight (esp. Wallace, 284–86).

2. Dinshaw’s statement that “the Clerk is made to fashion his narrative around Griselda’s changes of clothes” (144), for example, could very easily apply to all of the poets who translate Griselda’s tale. See J. Burke Severs, *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer’s “Clerkes Tale”* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1972), 215–50; Roberta L. Krueger, “Uncovering Griselda: Christine de Pizan, ‘une seule chemise,’ and the Clerical Tradition: Boccaccio, Petrarch, Philippe de Mézières and the Ménagier de Paris,” in Burns, *Medieval Fabrications*, 71–88; Helen Cooper, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The*

Canterbury Tales (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 189–90. On the specific theme of interpretation, see also Kevin Brownlee, “Commentary and the Rhetoric of Exemplarity: Griseldis in Petrarch, Philippe de Mézières, and the *Estoire*,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (1992): 865–90; and Emma Campbell, “Sexual Poetics and the Politics of Translation in the Tale of Griselda,” *Comparative Literature* 55, no. 3 (2003): 191–216.

3. See Dudley David Griffith, *The Origin of the Griselda Story* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1931), esp. 92–93; Elizabeth Salter, *Chaucer: The “Knight’s Tale” and the “Clerk’s Tale”* (London: Edward Arnold, 1962), 47–48; John P. McCall, “The Clerk’s Tale and the Theme of Obedience,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1966): 260–69; and Dolores Warwick Frese, “Chaucer’s *Clerk’s Tale*: The Monsters and the Critics Reconsidered,” *The Chaucer Review* 8 (1973): 133–46.

4. Most recently, Sarah Stanbury describes the transformation of Griselda through the lens of sacramental ritual, demonstrating how Chaucer’s Griselda becomes “an object of pilgrimage.” “Translating Griselda,” in *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 122–52; quotation 131. Kathy Lavezzo discusses Griselda’s materialism as it is reflected through the theme of death as another form of luxury consumption. “Chaucer and Everyday Death: The Clerk’s Tale, Burial, and the Subject of Poverty,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 23 (2001): 255–87. Susan Crane has illuminated the historicity of Griselda’s sartorial symbolism, pointing out the way that her reclothing by Walter and Janicula spoke to fourteenth-century court rituals of marriage and divorce in *The Performance of Self*, 21–38. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber has found that the popularity of the Griselda theme in the art and literature of Renaissance Florence coincided with rituals of marriage and the steady erosion of women’s property rights, in “The Griselda Complex: Dowry and Marriage Gifts in the Quattrocento,” in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 213–46. Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass describe the use of guild liveries as a type of “translation” of Griselda in the early modern dramatic versions of the tale in *Renaissance Clothing*, 220–44.

5. This “obsession” has quantifiable evidence: Griselda is stripped of her clothes three times, she wears five apparently different garments (her garments of “richesse” at her wedding, her smock when cast out of Walter’s palace, her “olde coote” when she returns to her father’s house, her “rude and somdeel eek torent” clothing when waiting on Walter and his new bride-to-be, and her “clooth of gold” when Walter reconciles with her), and the word “array” is used seventeen times in the tale. The most extensive study regarding this amplification of the theme of array is still that of Kristine Gilmartin Wallace, who suggests that the tale’s important expansion of the theme both distinguishes it from its sources and reveals Chaucer’s attention to the realistic “psychological coherence” of Walter and Griselda’s marriage. Kristine Gilmartin Wallace, “Array as Motif in the Clerk’s Tale,” *Rice University Studies* 62 (1976): 99–110; quotation 99.

6. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 1984), 77. Related to this is Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital, which he describes as “a transformed and thereby disguised form of physical, ‘economic’ capital, [which] produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only inasmuch, as it conceals the fact that it originates in ‘material’ forms of capital which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects,” in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 183;

also *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 112–21.

7. This theme is explored most fully in *CT* 4.456–62, 621–23.

8. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xix, 29–42.

9. For a more thorough discussion of sartorial discourses in fourteenth-century England, see my discussion and corresponding citations in my introduction.

10. Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 324.

11. See, for example, Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xvi.

12. “There are only four images of color in the entire poem,” Charles Muscatine declares in his influential study of Chaucerian style, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 192.

13. Many of the details in Chaucer’s clothing descriptions are taken from *Le Livre Griseldis*, the French translation of Petrarch’s version known for its realism in comparison to Petrarch’s allegory. These details include the discussion of the unwearability of Griselda’s old robe and the revulsion of the ladies to touching Griselda’s old clothing when they are instructed by Walter to strip her and dress her in finery. Chaucer himself added the details of the cloth of gold and the jeweled crown in which Griselda is clothed at the end of the tale. Chaucer takes the greater plot explanations—such as Walter’s wanting her to bring “no thyng of hir olde geere” into his house—from Petrarch. See Severs 3–37, 135–80, 190–211; and Carleton Brown, Germaine Dempster, and G. H. Gerould, *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales*, ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), 288–331. See also Dinshaw, 144; Gilmartin Wallace, 100–101; and Helen Cooper, 189–90.

14. Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 74–85.

15. Muscatine, 191.

16. The curious tension between the tale’s high style and its apparent simplicity has generated divergent readings of the Clerk’s overall style. While Muscatine states that “the poem has a fine astringency, an austerity, that will not appeal to the untutored” (191), David Wallace discusses the same quality in terms of the tale’s “policy of removing obstacles that stand between the story and the common reader” (286). My own opinion is that, like his garments, he gives the appearance of rhetorical simplicity while still indulging in a sophisticated rhetoric of his own, above the heads of the secular pilgrims.

17. Mann, 74.

18. On fourteenth-century discourses about the “new” and “old” fashion aesthetic, see Newton, 14–18, 38, and my discussion below. Hodges has recently offered a more thorough argument that the Clerk’s garment as “social mirror” counters, or at least complicates, the “ideal” figure he has been supposed to present. Citing contemporary debates over proper clerkly attire, the problematic symbolism of “thredbare” garments (worn at times by both Avarice and Coueitise), and the Clerk’s potential for the vice of *curiositas*, or excessive desire for knowledge, Hodges comes to the conclusion that his garment displays the precarious balance of his current life situation. See Hodges, *Chaucer and Clothing*, 160–98.

19. See Patricia J. Eberle's argument that Chaucer expected his audience to have "a lively interest in the world of getting and spending money, the world of commerce," in "Commercial Language and Commercial Outlook in the *General Prologue*," *The Chaucer Review* 18, no. 2 (1983): 161–74; quotation 163.

20. Macrobius. *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 1.2.11. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, trans. Margaret F. Nims (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1967), 36–38.

21. As Hodges has pointed out, and as I briefly discussed in my introduction, the *Canterbury Tales* provides readers with "the widest range (quality and value) of contemporary fabric names in a single English literary work in the Middle Ages." Hodges, *Chaucer and Costume*, 233.

22. I borrow this point from Benson, who suggests that Chaucer thought this type of *descriptio* was old-fashioned, which is why he used it in the *Miller's Tale*. Larry D. Benson, "Rhetorical Descriptions of Beautiful People: *Poetria Nova*, *Romance of the Rose*, and Guy of Warwick," *The Harvard Chaucer Website*, <http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/>.

23. Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, "Explanatory Notes," 879.

24. Lynn Staley makes a similar point in a different context: "how can her clothes mean? If Griselda's new clothes signify her translation from commoner to queen, her marriage to the husband of all souls, why are we not distraught when she puts them off?" In David Aers and Lynn Staley, *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 238.

25. See, for example, Crane, 21–29.

26. Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, 23.

27. Here Griselda seems to echo the gems "set" in gold that Walter had made for her prior to meeting her (254).

28. *MED*, s.v. "richesse."

29. *MED*, s.v. "swich."

30. Griselda, however, is also named three times in the *Envoy*, which brings her entire total to thirty-one. Walter, by comparison, is named ten times throughout the tale.

31. In Aers and Staley, 236. See also Lynn Staley Johnson, "The Prince and His People: A Study of the Two Covenants in the Clerk's Tale," *The Chaucer Review* 10.1 (Summer 1975): 17–29.

32. Susan Yager, "Chaucer's *Peple* and *Folk*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 100 (April 2001): 211–23.

33. Yager, 221. Also see Paul Strohm's discussion of the "swarm of 'folk'" who gape at the marvelous gifts in the *Squire's Tale*, in *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 170; and David Aers's discussion of "the people" as Mede's followers in *Piers Plowman*, in "Vox populi and the Literature of 1381," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 432–53, esp. 439. For additional ramifications of this public gaze, see Sarah Stanbury, "Regimes of the Visual in Premodern England: Gaze, Body, and Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*," *New Literary History* 28, no. 2 (1997): 261–89.

34. Muscatine, 192.

35. According to the *MED*, the word "likierous" was used to connote both lascivi-

ousness and luxuriousness, with the common theme being excess or self-indulgent desire, pride, or way of living, *MED*, s.v. “likorous.”

36. According to the Parson, the first finger of the hand of lechery is “the fool lookynge of the fool womman and of the fool man; that sleeth, right as the basilicok sleeth folk by the venym of his sighte, for the coveitise of eyen folweth the coveitise of the herte” (*CT* 10.852).

37. *MED*, s.v. “bisen,” v. 5b.

38. See John M. Ganim, “The Noise of the People,” in *Chaucerian Theatricality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 108–20.

39. Newton, 14–18, 38.

40. McCracken, 117.

41. See Lillian M. Bisson, “All That Glitters: Trade, Industry, and the Money Economy,” in *Chaucer and the Late Medieval World* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 165–87, at 169; and J. L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy, 1150–1500* (London: Dent, 1985), 144, 285.

42. Hence, while the middling classes actually dress themselves in “newe” garments, Chaucer once again reserves for the educated aristocracy the potential for insight into such material performances. The Knight subtly undercuts the value of novelty, nostalgically claiming that all new fashions simply recycle old ones: “Ther is no newe gyse that it nas old” (*CT* 1.2125). His son the Squire has a more problematic statement on innovation, first proclaiming humankind’s natural love of novelty (*CT* 5.610), but then, as if to counter any existing claims that state otherwise, later declaring that even noble blood cannot prevent this love of novelty (*CT* 5.619–20). Like his father’s own stance on novelty and fashion, the Squire’s defense of “novelries” (*CT* 5.610) simultaneously discloses his own worldview and positions himself in contrast to (and in competition with) the more traditional ways of his father. However, it also reveals the timeliness and complexity of “newfangelnesse” as a subject in Chaucer’s world: by explicitly arguing that novelty seduces all classes, *including* the aristocracy, the Squire in effect highlights the ubiquity of the unspoken opposite argument: that change and newness are endemic only to the middle and lower classes.

43. See, for example, Owst, 355, 396.

44. The others being the silent Dyer, Weaver, Haberdasher, and Tapestry-Weaver of the *General Prologue*. We know the Merchant deals with the trade of wool and cloth because of his reference to “the passage between Middleburg and Orwell, the Netherlands and East Anglia, through which much of the English trade in wool and cloth passed from the 1380’s onwards.” Cooper, *Canterbury Tales*, 42.

45. Hodges argues, to the contrary, that a few of the Merchant’s garments are “neither as expensive nor as flagrant a sign of wealth as critics have supposed.” *Chaucer and Costume*, 86.

46. On the predicament of the bourgeois husband, see Patterson, 344; and Bisson, 169–70.

47. Considering the long-standing critical discourse on the ironic function of the *Envoy*, I feel I should point out that the larger themes of the *Envoy* as I discuss them here support the case that the *Envoy* was indeed meant as an address by the Clerk himself, though always with the underlying resonance of his own creator, Chaucer. On this critical debate, see George Lyman Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry* (Cambridge, MA:

Harvard University Press, 1915), 199–200; Michael D. Cherniss, “The *Clerk’s Tale* and *Envoy*, the Wife of Bath’s Purgatory, and the *Merchant’s Tale*,” *The Chaucer Review* 6 (1972): 235–54; Frese, 133–46; Thomas J. Farrell, “The ‘Envoy de Chaucer’ and the *Clerk’s Tale*,” *The Chaucer Review* 24 (1990): 329–36; Ganim, “Carnival Voices in the Clerk’s *Envoy*,” in *Chaucerian Theatricality*, 79–91; and Howell Chickering, “Form and Interpretation in the *Envoy* to the *Clerk’s Tale*,” *The Chaucer Review* 29 (1995): 352–72.

48. See Paul A. Olson’s reading of this passage as the Clerk’s attempt to associate the Wife with the flagrant materialism of the Epicurean sect, in *The “Canterbury Tales” and the Good Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 235–75. On the possible legal meaning of “secte” in this passage, see Joseph L. Baird, “The ‘Secte’ of the Wife of Bath,” *The Chaucer Review* 2 (1968): 188–90, and “*Secte* and *Suit* Again: Chaucer and Langland,” *The Chaucer Review* 6 (1971): 117–19; and Lillian Herlands Hornstein, “The Wyf of Bathe and the Merchant: From Sex to ‘Secte,’” *The Chaucer Review* 3 (1968): 65–67.

49. See, for example, Chaucer’s lyric “Against Women Unconstant,” which I discuss in chapter 2.

50. Hughes, “Regulating Women’s Fashions,” 144.

51. Roberta L. Krueger, “‘Nouvelles choses’: Social Instability and the Problem of Fashion in the *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry*, the *Ménagier de Paris* and Christine de Pizan’s *Livre des trois vertus*,” in *Medieval Conduct*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Robert L. A. Clark (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 49–85, esp. 76–81.

52. Crane, 30; Severs, 255, line 2.

53. Klapisch-Zuber, esp. 228–29.

54. Unlike any other item a wife might inherit from her husband, this garment “on her back” could not be claimed by creditors. See Frederick Pollock and Frederic Maitland, *The History of English Law*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 427–30. According to Janet S. Loengard, this does not mean that this garment was the only thing that married women received when their husbands died; in parts of England they received “dower,” or life interest in land, and in some areas “thirds,” and were even sometimes executors of the will. What the *paraphernalia* law represents is “the personal property [women] got as of right everywhere in England, with no gift from the husband—indeed, sometimes in spite of his wishes” (email message to author, April 27, 2003). Much of Loengard’s work on the subject of paraphernalia rights has been presented in conference paper form: “(Some of) the Clothes on Her Back: Widows, Personal Property, and Paraphernalia in Late Medieval England” (36th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, 2001); “Wills, Wives, and Chattels: Husbands’ Attitudes to Household Property in Late-Medieval England” (Medieval Academy of America, Minneapolis, MN, 2003). A related essay is her “Plate, Good Stuff, & Household Things: Husbands, Wives & Chattels in England at the End of the Middle Ages,” in “*Tant d’Emprises*—So Many Undertakings: Essays in Honour of Anne F. Sutton,” ed. Livia Visser-Fuchs, special issue, *The Ricardian* 13 (2003): 334–38. See also Maryanne Kowaleski’s discussion of the difference between *common law*, under which women were “mere adjuncts” of their husbands, and *commercial law* (or law merchant), under which a woman could be considered “*femme sole*” if she traded separately from her husband, and under which men were not necessarily responsible for their wives’ trading debts. Kowaleski, “Women’s Work in a Market Town: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century,” in *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial*

Europe, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 145–64, quotation 146.

55. See, for example, “A Statute Concerning Diet and Apparel,” 37 Edwardi III (1363), *SR* 1:380–81. On Italian Renaissance legislations of gold clothing and other luxuries, see Hughes, “Sumptuary Law and Social Relations in Renaissance Italy,” in *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West*, edited by John Bossy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 69–100; and the aforementioned studies by Stuard and Frick.

56. *Wimbledon’s Sermon “Redde Rationem Villicationis tue”: A Middle English Sermon of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Ione Kemp Knight (Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1967), lines 523–26.

57. Goldsmiths were legislated in the 1363 English sumptuary law, in which they were legally required to have surveyors make an “Assay” of their “Allay” (*SR* 1:380).

58. Crane, 36.

59. *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, lines 253–56, 265–70; and *Roman de la Rose*, lines 8587–92, 8597–600.

60. In a related scene in the *Merchant’s Tale*, May’s predicament provokes the goddess Proserpine to bestow on all women the gift of cunning doubleness of “visage” (*CT* 4.2272–75).

61. On the various types of expenditure that this word expressed in this period, see *MED*, s.v. “dispenche.”

62. See de Certeau, xii–xx, 39–42, esp. 40–41. The Clerk’s sarcastic reference to women’s sumptuary “work” also invites correlation with a key aspect of what Thorstein Veblen termed “vicarious consumption,” that is, the process in which women’s association with consumption as a type of “work” coincides with their ultimate exclusion from economically productive, “public” work. See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Viking Press, 1967 [1899]), 81. Such a reading has obvious ramifications in this period, in which women’s increased positions in post-plague market production heightened anxiety about socioeconomic gender roles, and moreover, which directly preceded women’s relative exclusion from the workforce in the early modern period. See Martha C. Howell, *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), esp. 182–83.

63. A corresponding focus on marital *dispenche* exists in the *Shipman’s Tale*, which critical tradition surmises probably originated as a tale for the Wife. This tale’s exploration of the themes of marital, sexual, and financial spending, exchanging, and debt echoes the Wife’s own; indeed, as in the Wife’s *Prologue*, in this tale marital *dispenche*, though technically the responsibility of husbands, is ultimately controlled through manipulation by wives. See esp. lines 1–19.

64. “(Je suy) comme une chicheface, Maigre par dessous ma peaucelle” [“I am like a Chicheface, thin beneath my skin”]. Jehan le Fèvre, *Les Lamentations de Matheolus et Le Livre de Leesce de Jehan le Fèvre*, ed. A. G. Van Hamel (Paris: Émile Bouillon, 1892), 3.3320–21, mistakenly numbered as line 3220 in the edition of text and subsequent citations.

65. See my article “Lydgate’s Golden Cows: Appetite and Avarice in *Bycorne* and *Chychevache*” in Cooper and Denny-Brown, eds., *Lydgate Matters*, 35–56.

66. *MED*, s.v. “chinche.” On the names of these beasts, see Eleanor Prescott Hammond, *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press,

1927), 113–15. See also Malcolm Jones, “Monsters of Misogyny: Bigorne and Chichevache—Suite et Fin?” in *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, ed. Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), 203–21; and Steven M. Taylor, “Monsters of Misogyny: The Medieval French ‘Dit de Chincheface’ and the ‘Dit de Bigorne,’” *Allegorica* 5 (Winter 1980): 99–124. See also Lydgate’s poem *Bycorne and Chychevache*, in *The Minor Poems*, 2:433–37.

67. MED, s.v. “chinchehede.”

68. William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman. A Critical Edition of the B-Text Based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London: Everyman, 1995), V.72.

69. On the meaning of “Vache” in this poem and its connection to Sir Philip de la Vache, see Edith Rickert, “Thou Vache,” *Modern Philology* 11 (1913–14): 209–25. For interpretations of the word in terms of biblical allegory, see David E. Lampe, “The Truth of a ‘Vache’: The Homely Homily of Chaucer’s ‘Truth,’” *Papers on Language and Literature* 9 (1973): 311–14; Alfred David, “The Truth about ‘Vache,’” *The Chaucer Review* 11 (1977): 334–37; and Heiner Gillmeister, *Chaucer’s Conversion: Allegorical Thought in Medieval Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 1–59.

70. “Distreyne thy lust” replaces “Hold the heye wey” in the manuscript British Library, MS Cotton Otho A.XVIII. See Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, “Textual Notes,” 1189. On the possibility that the envoy of “Truth” is a later addition, see Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, “Explanatory Notes,” 1084.

71. See also *Boece* IV.m.3, and II.pr.5.

72. On “wantonly adorned” women who capture souls and deceive men, see Owst, 390–404, quote 395. On the preambles of sumptuary laws that agonize over women’s “excessive expenditures on wicked and impractical” attire that “consumes their husbands and sons,” see Stanley Chojnacki, “The Power of Love: Wives and Husbands in Late Medieval Venice,” in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 126–40, at 131.

73. On the new status of women in market production challenging “male preserves” and helping to form a new gender identity, see Howell, esp. 182–83.

74. Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 265.

75. Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, 17.

76. Pollock and Maitland, 430.

77. Boccaccio illuminates this process in his description of women’s postmarriage power grab: “Thinking they have climbed to a high station, though they know they were born to be servants, they at once take hope and whet their appetite for mastery; and while pretending to be meek, humble, and obedient, they beg from their wretched husbands the crowns, girdles, cloths of gold, ermines, the wealth of clothes, and the various other ornaments in which they are seen resplendent every day; the husband does not perceive that all these are weapons to combat his mastery and vanquish it. The women, no longer servants but suddenly equals . . . contrive with all their might to seize control.” Giovanni Boccaccio, *Corbaccio*, trans. Anthony K. Cassell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 24. David Wallace describes this gendered consumer development in similar terms (*Chaucerian Polity*, 19).

78. See, for example, Benson’s gloss on this word, which identifies both meanings, in Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, 153.

79. See the *Merchant's Tale*, lines 2057–62, especially: “A scorioun; that makith fair semelaunt with the face, and prickith with the tail; so a wicked womman drawith by flaterynge, and prickith til to deth” (CT 4.2062). See also gloss from Ecclesiasticus 26:10 in the Wycliffite Bible, quoted in Whiting and Whiting, *Proverbs*, S96. See also Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, “Explanatory Notes,” 972.

80. On the sumptuary discourses regarding the devil's army, see Owst, 393. Men, moreover, were taught to defend themselves from this vestimentary attack: St. Bernadino of Siena, for example, advises that a husband should counter his spouse's sumptuary excesses by “beating a wife ‘with feet and fists.’” Discussed in Angela M. Lucas, *Women in the Middle Ages: Religion, Marriage and Letters* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 127.

81. See Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, “Explanatory Notes,” 884.

82. Newton, 8.

83. Henry Knighton, *Knighton's Chronicle, 1137–1396*, ed. and trans. G. H. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 92–95. See also Newton's discussion of Galvano della Flamma's descriptions of Milanese amazons in golden girdles, 10–11.

84. Newton, 10.

85. While the Host wishes aloud that his wife could have heard the tale (CT 4.1212b–d), the Merchant aligns his own “wepying and waylyng” (CT 4.1213) with those husbands of the *Envoy* beaten down by their profligate arch wives; his own wife would “overmacche” the devil, he says, with her “passyng crueltee” and her “cursednesse” (CT 4.1220, 1225, 1239). On Chaucer's likely canceling of the Host's stanza, see Benson, gen. ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, “Explanatory Notes,” 884.

86. *Bycorne and Chychevache*, in *The Minor Poems*, 2:433–38. On Lydgate's London poems, see Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate (1371–1449): A Bio-Bibliography*, English Literary Studies 71 (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1997), 28–31. In a related matter, Lydgate seems to take up the Clerk's ascetic ethos when he describes his pilgrim persona, in the *Siege of Thebes*, as wearing a “thredbare hood” (90).

87. Lydgate, *The Minor Poems*, 2:433.

88. It is possible that Lydgate also meant his use of rhyme royal for this fabliaulike fable to enhance the sacred–secular tension; Chaucer uses the form for works of *sentence* only.

89. In his *Troy Book*, more generally, Lydgate briefly mentions “Bycornys” along with satyrs as one of the “Diuerse goddis of þe wodis grene” (2.7702, 7700). Bicorn's link with the satyr, a hybrid man-beast, further suggests that the beasts in *Bycorne and Chychevache* should be seen as representative of humans and their “beastly” behavior.

90. See, for example, his “Letabundus” (Lydgate, *The Minor Poems*, 1:49–59), line 179, and John Lydgate, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, 3 vols., ed. F. J. Furnivall and Katherine B. Locock, EETS e.s. 77, 83, 92 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1899–1904), 5356.

91. Ezekiel 34:25 also mentions “beasts” that feed on the Lord's flock: “And I will make a covenant of peace with them, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land.”

92. On the need for moderation from “excesse or scarsete” in diet, see Lydgate, “A Dietary, and a Doctrine for Pestilence,” in *The Minor Poems*, 2:702–9; especially lines 77–80. On the larger discourse of moderation in this poem, see Claire Sponsler, “Eating Lessons: Lydgate's ‘Dietary’ and Consumer Conduct,” in *Medieval Conduct*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Robert L. A. Clark (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 1–22.

93. See, for example, *Le Pardonneur, Le Triacleur et La Taverniere*, in André Tissier, *Recueil de farces (1450–1550)*, tome 5 (Geneva: Droz, 1989), 247, line 35 and note.

94. Lydgate, “A dyte of womenhis hornys,” titled “Horns Away,” in *The Minor Poems*, 2:662–65.

95. Lydgate often uses the term *gossamer*, a specific type of gauzy gold material popular for decoration in the Middle Ages, to contrast with simpler material. In his satirical poem “The Order of Fools,” for example, Lydgate twice compares gossamer to wool, in *The Minor Poems*, 2:449–55; lines 63–64, 137–38.

96. Owst, 393–96.

97. Owst, 403. One early-fourteenth-century French poem likewise finds its objections to women’s horns on the fact that women wear such clothes “por tuer les homes,” to kill the men. According to the poem, this marital conflict is encouraged by the Bishop of Paris, who will give ten days’ pardon to anyone who condemns horned ladies in public with the phrase “push, ram,” in reference to the Exodus passage. See “Des Cornetes,” in Frederick W. Fairholt, *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume* (London: Percy Society, 1849), 29–39, line 22. Men can also be seen defending themselves with a sword and shield from a woman wearing a horned headdress in a medieval misericord in a parish church in Ludlow, reproduced in Francis Bond, *Wood Carvings in English Churches I: Misericords* (Oxford: Henry Frowde, 1910), 180.

98. Bromyard, s.v. “Ornatus,” *Summa Praedicatorum*; discussed in Owst, 403.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. “On the Corruption of Public Manners,” *Political Poems and Songs*, ed. Wright, 2:251. This poem has been analyzed and renamed by Wendy Scase in her article “Proud Gallants and Popeholys Priests’: The Context and Function of a Fifteenth-Century Satirical Poem,” *Medium Aevum* 63, no. 2 (1994): 275–86. Scase aptly suggests that the title phrase of her article presents a more appropriate title for the poem.

2. Refrain to the late-fifteenth-century “Huff! A Galaunt,” from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson 34, fol. 4v, published in Rossell Hope Robbins, *Historical Poems of the XIV and XV Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 138–39.

3. *MED*, s.v. “galaunt” (n.).

4. The two most comprehensive studies of the early modern gallant focus on the figure’s connections to drama. See Tony Davenport, “*Lusty fresche galaunts*,” in *Aspects of Early English Drama*, ed. Paula Neuss (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), 111–28; and Amanda Bailey, *Flaunting: Style and the Subversive Male Body in Renaissance England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), especially chapters 2 and 5. Jean Howard discusses the relationship between the gallant’s ever-changing fashion and ever-growing debt in *Theatre of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598–1642* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2007), esp. 6, 84–88; Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass also discuss the figure in relationship to what they call the “banking system” of stolen, pawned, and used clothing in the culture and literature of the early modern theater, in *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, 193–94.

5. The medieval galaunt has not garnered a great deal of critical interest in its own context. For example, while Davenport begins his survey article with a survey of medi-

eval examples, his purpose is to read these texts with an eye toward the gallant of early modern drama. Scase's article has offered a valuable treatment of one medieval galaunt poem, the same anonymous poem from which I take my first epigraph. Richard Firth Green's important partial reading of the poem "On the Times" that I discuss below concentrates on the historical circumstances of the poem and only briefly touches upon the figure of the galaunt. Neither the fourteenth-century "On the Times" nor the most representative medieval galaunt poem, the fifteenth-century *Treatise of a Galaunt*, both of which I discuss in depth below, has yet to receive sustained critical analysis.

6. These features are picked up and reworked in the early modern period. See, for example, Bailey's discussion of the "rioting gallant" and the "brave" gallant (62). Part of Bailey's argument considers the way in which gallants and other figures of early modern style "transform marginality into insurgency" (136). The medieval galaunt's origins in rebel figures seem to suggest that the opposite is true in this period.

7. In claiming this as an English phenomenon I do not mean to suggest that the word or concept of the "galaunt" does not exist in other cultures. Most particularly, the word is taken from the French term *galant* and was used in medieval French culture to describe men of pleasure and fashion. The distinction upon which I rest my discussion is that the English use of the word implies an aesthetic that is *always already borrowed*; vestimentary imitation becomes a central element in English notions of the galaunt and makes up an important part of the trope of English *varietas vestium* as an aspect of English cultural history and English poetics. *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français. Le Moyen Âge*, ed. Algirdas Julien Greimas (Paris: Larousse, 1979; repr. Larousse Bordas, 1997), s.v. "galer."

8. "Dandyism appears above all in periods of transition, when democracy is not yet all-powerful, and aristocracy is only just beginning to totter and fall. In the disorder of these times, certain men who are socially, politically and financially ill at ease, but are all rich in native energy, may conceive the idea of establishing a new kind of aristocracy, all the more difficult to shatter as it will be based on the most precious, the most enduring faculties, and on the divine gifts which work and money are unable to bestow. Dandyism is the last spark of heroism amid decadence." Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1995), 28–29. See also Lynette C. Black, "Baudelaire as Dandy: Artifice and the Search for Beauty," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 17, no. 1 (Fall 1988): 186–95; and Michel Lemaire, *Le Dandysme de Baudelaire à Mallarmé* (Montreal, Quebec: University of Montreal Press, 1978).

9. *Peter Idley's Instructions to his Son*, ed. Charlotte D'Evelyn, MLA Monograph 6 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), II.B.50–51. On Idley's use of the galaunt figure see Matthew Giancarlo, "Dressing up a 'galaunt': Traditional Piety and Fashionable Politics in Peter Idley's 'translacions' of Mannyng and Lydgate," in *After Arundel* (Turnhout; Brepols, 2011), 429–48.

10. Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 32.

11. *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français*, s.v. "galer."

12. British Library Manuscripts Catalogue Online, <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/manuscripts/> (accessed October 22, 2009). See Margaret Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), Table 1; Ralph Hanna, "John Shirley and British Library, MS Additional

16165," *Studies in Bibliography*, 49 (1996): 95–105. The instructions appear alongside Shirley's decorated motto and signature declaring ownership of the book and right before his verse prologue enumerating its contents, which begin, significantly, with a copy of Chaucer's *Boece* glossed with so many personalized annotations that one critic has suggested that Shirley used the *Boece* as "largely a book of moral precepts for his own life." Tim William Machan, "Glosses in the Manuscripts of Chaucer's *Boece*," in Minnis, *The Medieval Boethius*, 125–38, at 133. On Shirley's "predilection for elaborate inscription," see Connolly, especially 16, 102–7; quotation 16.

13. Connolly, 14–23, esp. 19–20.

14. Newton, esp. 1–13, 54–55, 108–9. The doublet is identified as the start of modern fashion and the precursor to the modern suit in Hollander, 14–49, esp. 42–45. The phrasing "doublet of defense" or "jack of defense" was also used to describe a specific kind of jacket made from plates of armor covered in cloth or leather. *MED*, s.v. "jakke," n.2.1b. *OED*, s.v. "doublet," 1c.

15. Newton, 55; Crane, 13–14.

16. Newton, 55; *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 7, *Decline of Empire and Papacy*, ed. J. B. Bury (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 354. Froissart suggests an alternate etymology; see Newton, 119n29. The difference among the social states was usually preserved by the value of the materials, including the stuffing. Newton, 35, 55, 62; *MED*, s.v. "jakke," n.2. 1a–c; *OED*, s.v. "jack," n.2.1a–b. As both the *OED* and the *MED* definitions make clear, the jack was also occasionally worn by women. For the stylistic distinction between English jack and French jacque, see Piponnier and Mane, 166. There is some suggestion that the later expressions "Jack-a-dandy" and "Jack puffe" to describe galaunt figures may have been used in late-medieval England as well. In Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* Alisoun refers to the fashion-victim Absolon as "Jakke fool" (*CT* 1.3708), a phrase that might be seen as a precursor to later terms such as "Jack-a-dandy" and "Jack Puff" used for gallant figures in the seventeenth century. These expressions do not distinguish whether they use "jack" exclusively as a generic name or because of the dandy's short jacket; both have the same etymological relationship to the French commoner. *OED*, s.v. "jack" n.2 etym.; "Jack-a-dandy"; also *The Birth, Life, Death, Wil, and Epitaph, of Iack Puffe Gentleman* (1642), discussed by William Carew Hazlitt, *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England*. 4 vols. (London: J. R. Smith, 1866), 4:317. Hazlitt sees this poem as a continuation of the galaunt tradition (4:311).

17. "On the Times" survives in three mid-fifteenth-century manuscripts, Latin miscellanies in which the poem is the only, or one of the only, poems in English: London, British Library, MS Harley 536, fols. 34–35v (A-Text); London, British Library, MS Harley 971, fols. 21v–23v (B-Text); and Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fols. 108–10 (C-Text). Citations of the text are from Dean, *Medieval English Political Writings*, 140–46 (B-Text). Earlier editions are found in Wright, *Political Poems and Songs*, 1:270–78 (C-Text); and in *The World of Piers Plowman*, ed. Jeanne Krochalis and Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 87–95 (A-Text). About the poet nothing is known, although it has been suggested that he is also the author of a similar poem about the poll tax of 1380–81 and the subsequent uprising titled "Tax has tenet [harmed] us all" (Dean, 125). On the dating of the poem, see Richard Firth Green, "A Poem of 1380," *Speculum* 66, no. 2 (April 1991): 330–41. My reading of this poem owes a significant debt to Richard Firth Green's earlier study.

18. On the contemporary abuse of retainers of maintenance and favor and the related perception that liveried retainers cause social disorder in England in the 1380s, see Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, 57–74, 179–85. Crane discusses liveries in a different context, focusing on the use of Maying liveries and liveries of chivalric orders in *The Performance of Self*, 40–41, 107–39. See also Lachaud, 279–98.

19. A similar expression can be found in the *Prologue* of William Langland's *Piers Plowman* [B-Text], lines 141–42.

20. Green, "A Poem of 1380," 336–39.

21. Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H. T. Riley, 2 vols., Rolls Series 28 (London: Longman, Green, 1863–64), 1:435; Green, "A Poem of 1380," 336.

22. *MED*, s.v. "jakke," n.1a.

23. *Piers Plowman*, *Prologue*, lines 146–208.

24. *MED*, s.v. "jakke" n.2b. Green sees this line as referring to Philipot more specifically; see "A Poem of 1380," 334.

25. Green, "A Poem of 1380," 335.

26. Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, 1:457. On the possibility that ex-members of Woodstock's army were involved in these events, see Green, "A Poem of 1380," 340.

27. This image of the ornamented galaunts wandering destructively through the countryside seems to coincide with the grievances voiced by an unsuccessful Commons initiative in the Salisbury parliament of 1384 discussed by Strohm. In Strohm's words, this initiative complained that "locally powerfully persons, supported by the signs or ornaments of lords, 'per dominos regni signis quasi ornamentis diversis,' sought to oppress poor persons in the countryside." *Hochon's Arrow*, 59–60.

28. Printed in Robert P. Miller, *Chaucer: Sources and Backgrounds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 169.

29. Also *Colossians* 3:8–15. See Miller, *Chaucer: Sources*, 169.

30. Olson, 235–75. Texts such as the Old French *Les Echecs amoureux* (1400) describe medieval followers of this philosophy as believing that "all delights are good and praiseworthy and that one should pursue them as much as one can, without qualification . . . [because] nature has given a natural desire, called the concupiscible appetite by philosophers, to desire and pursue the delectable things that we see with delight when we can." *The Chess of Love*, ed. and trans. Joan Morton Jones, 5 vols. (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1968), 4:814–17, 5:927.

31. Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), esp. 17, 116. Nolan, "Beauty," in *Middle English: Oxford 21st Century Approaches to Literature*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 207–21; esp. 217.

32. In the subsequent lines of the poem Boethius outlines the (Fortune-like) cyclical nature of the Platonic soul, which, as I discuss in chapter 1, must fall to earth and the material realm before it can turn back to God and rise again to his realm (III.m.9:13–28).

33. According to Scarry, beauty "brings copies of itself into being," prompting a process that sometimes falls into an "imperfect version" of this impulse, such as cheap imitations and material covetousness. Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), esp. 3–11; quotations 3, 5, 10.

34. In "On the Times" the complaint that galaunts strut and saunter about [*incedunt ridiculose*, "above"], which becomes so prevalent in later poems, uses wording

similar to Pseudo-Boethius's *De disciplina scholarium* that I discuss in chapter 2, which describes the haughty semicircular gait [*"semicirculariter incedere gaudet"*] of the fashion victim poised to suffer misfortune. *De disciplina scholarium*, PL 64:1233D–38D; quotation 1228B.

35. Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 28.

36. Andrew Galloway, "Latin England," 41–95; esp. 59–65.

37. *The Brut, or the Chronicles of England*, vol. 1, 249; also Robbins, *Historical Poems*, 38. This verse is discussed in Scattergood, 271; Owst, 407n3; and Scase, 276–78.

38. Scase, 276–78. The lines also appear as part of the lyric "The Prophecy of Merlin," in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 115r, printed in Dean, ed., *Medieval English Political Writings*, 9. Dean's introduction "Poems of Political Prophecy" offers a helpful discussion of the relationship between complaint lyric and prophetic political poems (1–8).

39. Dean, 146.

40. See Montgomery Bohna, "Armed Force and Civic Legitimacy in Jack Cade's Revolt, 1450," *English Historical Review* 118, no. 477 (June 2003): 563–82; and Isabel M. W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

41. As I discuss further below (n62), this excerpt of the sermon was copied by an early-sixteenth-century reader into the final page of Caxton's 1478 edition of Chaucer's *Boece*, located in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Incunabula ChL1766a, fol. 94v. Julia Boffey discusses this excerpt and quotes a slightly different version in "The Treatise of a Galaunt in Manuscript and Print," *The Library* 15, no. 3 (September 1993): 175–86, at 175. On the inclusion of this excerpt as well as eight lines of Middle English verse on love in the Pierpont Morgan Library manuscript, see C. F. Buhler, "Libri Impressi cum Notis Manuscriptis, I," *Modern Language Notes* 53 (1938): 245–49.

42. Contemporary rumors about Cade having military experience, possibly as a captain in the war with France, have been upheld by modern historians. See Bohna, 563–82; Harvey, 78–79.

43. Henry Noble MacCracken dismisses Lydgate's authorship of this poem, in part because of its style and in part because "Lydgate, who delighted in fine array and rich patrons," would, he claims, not have written a tirade against contemporary fashions. He categorizes the *Treatise* as a spurious poem, a finding not yet challenged by later critics. See MacCracken, *The Minor Poems*, 1:xxxii–xxxiii.

44. The poem exists in three manuscripts: Rome, English College, MS A.347, fols. 78–81; the manuscript formerly known as Astor MS A.2, fols. 210–13, which is now in private hands; and Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.21, fols. 247–48v (Boffey, 176–83). See also Frederick J. Furnivall's introduction to the poem's manuscript and early print history in "Wynkyn de Worde's Treatise of this Galaunt," in *Ballads from Manuscripts*, vol. 1 (London: Taylor and Co., 1868–72), 438–45.

45. Unless otherwise stipulated, quotations of this poem are from Furnivall's edition of Rome, English College, MS A.347, fols. 78–81, one of the three late-fifteenth-century versions of the *Treatise* and the one that served as ostensible model for Wynkyn de Worde's later printings. For a description of the manuscript context, see Boffey, esp. 176–83; and Ralph H. Klinefelter, "A Newly Discovered Fifteenth-Century English Manuscript," *Modern Language Quarterly* 14 (1953): 3–6. The poem is also printed in Hazlitt, 3:149–64; and described, along with other extant galaunt poems, in Rossell

Hope Robbins, "Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions," in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500*, ed. A. E. Hartung, vol. 5, no. 160 (New Haven, CT: Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1975), 1469–70.

46. Corresponding biblical passages that were popular with sermonizers in this period include Ecclesiastes 21:5: "The House that is very rich shall be brought to nothing by pride"; and Zephaniah 1:8: "And it shall come to pass in the day of the victim of the Lord, that I will visit upon the princes, and upon the king's sons, and upon all such as are clothed with strange apparel." See Owst, 409.

47. D'Evelyn, ed., *Idley's Instructions*, 176. I also discuss this passage in more depth in the pages below.

48. This challenge to England's national aesthetic speaks to a larger tension in the late-medieval period between personal and national appearance, or what Gilles Lipovetsky calls "national individualism" versus "aesthetic individualism" (32–33).

49. Galloway, "Latin England," 59–65.

50. Quoted and translated in Galloway, "Latin England," 60.

51. As explained by Boffey, these manuscripts are the former Astor MS A.2, now in private collection, and Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.21, fols. 247–48v. My quotation of Astor MS lines 64–70 is taken from Robbins, "Poems Dealing with Contemporary Conditions," 1469.

52. Boffey, 179–80; quotation 180.

53. Davenport also discusses this everyman quality, esp. 114–16.

54. Although as Galloway has shown, thanks to Higden, acrostics became fashionable among some English chroniclers and vernacular poets as well (49). Galloway also describes the similar way in which Higden betrays in his *Polychronicon* the very *varietas* he shuns (72).

55. *OED*, s.v. "gallant," 1b.

56. This theme gets picked up in the dramas. In the stage directions from *Wisdom* (1460), for example, the galaunt's connection to Lucifer is revealed, not by his taking off the galaunt's costume and revealing Lucifer beneath, but by the very opposite: "entreth Lucyfer in a dewyllys aray wythowt and wythin as a prowde galonte." *Wisdom*, ed. Mark Eccles, *The Macro Plays*, EETS 262 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 125.

57. Robbins, *Historical Poems*, 138.

58. *Mary Magdalene*, from the Digby manuscript, line 492; David Bevington, *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 687–753, quotation 708.

59. "The gallants, in short, here become the anticlerical satirists" (277). Scase also notes the importance of song to the galaunt's representation (277–78).

60. Boffey, 176–83; quotation 180. Scase, 276–78.

61. Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, 9.

62. For clarity of meaning I have capitalized the F in the word "Fortune" in this passage. Remembering that the excerpt from Bishop Alcock's sermon on this poem was written at the end of a copy of Caxton's 1478 printing of the *Boece* (Pierpont Morgan Library's Incunabula ChL1766a) reveals another level of connection between the galaunts of the *Treatise* and the trope of Fortune. If we look at the excerpt's immediate surroundings in the Incunabula ChL1766a, we are reminded that the very end of the *Boece* addresses an aspect of free will that is particularly evocative in relation to the galaunt: how personal changes can exist in a world dictated by God. For instance, after

an extended conversation in the *Boece* about whether the protagonist has the power “to chaunge [his] purpos” (242), and about how God receives those changes when they occur (“schal nat the devyne science ben chaunged by my disposicioun whan that I wol o thing now and now anothir?” asks the protagonist [256–59]), Philosophie concludes that an unchanging God sees and comprehends all human changes: God “enbraseth at o strook alle thi mutaciouns” (273). Directly after Chaucer’s *Boece* (and before Alcock’s excerpt) in this book appears Caxton’s famous epilogue in which he connects Boethius’s theme of changeability—the “mutabilite of this transitorie lyfe” (94) and the “transitory & mutable worlde” (94v)—to the immortality of the English language and to the very real mortality of the English poet. While Chaucer’s language will live forever—“the sayd langage ornate & fayr . . . shal endure perpe/tuelly” (93v)—Caxton reminds us with vivid detail that Chaucer’s corpse is buried in a sepulcher in Westminster.

63. I borrow the term “verbal swagger” from Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, who use it to describe the poetic form of the fashionable torturers in the Towneley *Play of the Dice*, who are explicitly associated with Fortune. *The Towneley Plays*, vol. 1, ed. Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, EETS, s.s., 13–14 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 309–22; lines 396–416; also vol. 2, quotation 584n, 590n.

64. The galaunt’s characteristic utterance, “hof” or “huff,” epitomized by this chapter’s second epigraph, also corresponds to Fortune’s own prideful “huffing” in other poems, such as the *The Kingis Quair*: “Fortune the goddessse, hufing on the ground,” in *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, ed. Linne R. Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), line 1110. On the link of this utterance to medieval falconry, see Davenport, 114.

65. D’Evelyn, ed., *Idley’s Instructions*, II.176–89. For ease of reading, I have removed D’Evelyn’s editorial italics from this passage. While Idley’s choice of subjects in this text is determined by his sources—Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s early-fourteenth-century *Handlyng Synne*, and John Lydgate’s contemporary *Fall of Princes*—he elaborates freely and often, and none of the passages I have quoted are taken directly from either source or author. Idley’s tale of the knight and clerk, based on Mannyng’s tale, differs greatly in language. Mannyng’s text does not use the words “galaunt,” “fantasie,” “Fortune,” or “shappis,” although his point is to discuss the vices of “nouelry” (3344, 3353) and “þe newē gyse” (3212). *Robert of Brunne’s Handlyng Synne*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 119, 123 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1901; repr. 2002). In her introduction, D’Evelyn points out that clothing is one of Idley’s favorite subjects upon which to elaborate (44, 52).

66. The rest of the story relates how all the knight’s possessions—including “[e]very garment, bothe gowne and hooðe” (D’Evelyn, ed., *Idley’s Instructions*, II.213)—are divided up among the poor after his death; all except for the “gay cote” (II.215), which no one will accept. Eventually a prideful clerk begs to take the cloak, only to be consumed in a “sodeyn wildefeire” (II.227) as soon as he dons the “acursed” garment (II.231).

67. *Mary Magdalene*, line 506 (italics mine). Bevington, 705.

68. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, 9.

69. J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 54. Huizinga rephrases the ideas of anthropologist Leo Frobenius here. In Frobenius’s words, the mental process of play takes the following course: “The reality of the natural rhythm of genesis and extinction has seized hold of [human] consciousness, and this, inevitably and by reflex action, leads him to represent his emotion

in an act" (quoted in *Homo Ludens*, 16). See also Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), esp. 52–73; and my discussion of Gerda Reith's work below.

70. Huizinga, 17.

71. Huizinga, 142.

72. See Patch, *The Goddess Fortuna*, 81; Gerda Reith, *The Age of Chance: Gambling in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1–24; Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Dice, Cards, Wheels: A Different History of French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 16–20; 40. Kavanagh slightly mischaracterizes the medieval iconography of Fortune.

73. Robbins, *Historical Poems*, 139, lines 33–36.

74. Although as Rhiannon Purdie argues, the dicer is usually associated with cursing about Christ, here the curse clearly seems to be a reference to Christ's curse itself. See Purdie, "Dice-Games and the Blasphemy of Prediction," in *Medieval Futures: Attitudes to the Future in the Middle Ages*, ed. J. A. Burrow and Ian P. Wei (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2000), 167–84.

75. Purdie, 168.

76. Reith, 47, 77; Kavanagh, 44–45; Purdie, 170–71.

77. Kavanagh, 45–46.

78. These interactive poems, the most well-known of which are the unnamed fourteenth- and fifteenth-century poem edited by W. L. Braekman, and the fifteenth-century *Chaunse of the Dyse*, edited by Eleanor Hammond, direct the reader to throw three dice and then to locate his or her "fortune" in the corresponding verses. These poems outline and illustrate fifty-six potential throws of three dice, assigning for each throw a directive or prediction (as in Braekman's edited poem) or a prognostic character analysis, often based in Chaucerian literary characters (as in the *Chaunse of the Dyse*). See Eleanor Hammond, "The Chance of the Dice," *Englische Studien* 59 (1925): 1–16; W. L. Braekman, "Fortune-Telling by the Casting of Dice: A Middle English Poem and Its Background," *Studia Neophilologica* 52 (1980): 3–29. These poems are discussed in Purdie, 167–84; and in Mitchell, *Ethics and Eventfulness*, 47–68.

79. Kavanagh, 39.

80. Reith, 183.

81. Reith, 12.

82. The narrator of the fifteenth-century *Tale of Beryn* uses similar phrasing: "Berinus . . . lovid wele the dise, And for to pley at hazard . . . And al othir gamys þat losery was in." *The Tale of Beryn: With a Prologue of the Merry Adventure of the Pardoner with a Tapster at Canterbury*, ed. F. J. Furnivall and W. B. Stone. EETS, e.s. 105 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1909), 925; italics mine.

83. *Wace's Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, ed. Judith Weiss (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1999), lines 10587–88; pages 266–67. The dicing scene that includes these lines is quite extended and references the loss of clothes at other moments as well. For example, the following description of dicing casts: "Sis, cinc, quatre, trei, dous e as / Unt a plusurs toleit lur dras" [Six, five, four, three, two, and ace—these stripped many of their clothes (lines 10577–78; pages 266–67)].

84. Furnivall and Stone, eds., *The Tale of Beryn*, 928. As Jenny Adams discusses, Beryn's dicing-related nakedness is a recurring theme in this tale, one which marks through the metaphor of exposure Beryn's gullibility in matters of commerce and his

mistaken belief in personal profit at the expense of others—his “misplaced faith in games” rather than in fair exchange. *Power Play: The Literature and Politics of Chess in the Late Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 114–17; quotation 117.

85. *Si Quis Deciorum*, lines 97–98, in Whicher, 268–69. For other examples, see *In taberna quando sumus*, lines 9–16 (Whicher, 226–27); *Cum in Orbem Universum*, lines 89–96, 97–104 (Whicher, 276–77).

86. *Si Quis Deciorum*, lines 47; Whicher, 266–67.

87. Lines 22–24; Whicher, 262–63. Translation modified for sense.

88. Lydgate uses the dicing metaphor again a few lines later: “In this mater lat ws not tarye; / Alle stont on chaunge, who list to see, / Every thyng here dothe chaunge and varye, / Nowe feythe, nowe mutabylyte; / Nowe vpon tweyne, nowe vpon thre” (*The Minor Poems*, 2:809–13, lines 121–25).

89. This is part of Relihan’s argument in *The Prisoner’s Philosophy*.

CONCLUSION

1. “Thing Theory,” Brown, *Things*, 7.
2. Miller, “Materiality: An Introduction,” in Miller, *Materiality*, 41, 31.
3. Keane, “Signs Are Not the Garb of Meaning,” in Miller, *Materiality*, 186–90.
4. I borrow the well-used term “stripping of the altars” from Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992). The nineteenth-century architect Owen Jones complains that ever since the Reformation, “England has not had anything like a style of her own.” *Lectures on the Results of the Exhibition*, no. 11 (London: Royal Society of Arts, 1852), 401. Quoted and discussed in James Trilling, *Ornament: A Modern Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 152.

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Considering writers as diverse as Boethius, Alain de Lille, William Durand, Chaucer, and Lydgate, among others, Denny-Brown tracks the development of a literary and cultural trope that begins in the sixth century and finds its highest expression in the vernacular poetry of fifteenth-century England. Among the topics covered are Boethian discourses on the care of the self, the changing garments of Lady Fortune, novelty in ecclesiastical fashions, the sartorial legacy of Chaucer's *Griselda*, and the emergence of the English gallant. These literary treatments of vestimentary variation—which develop an aesthetics of change itself—enhance our understanding of clothing as a phenomenological and philosophical category in medieval Europe and illustrate the centrality of the Middle Ages to theories of aesthetics, of materiality, and of cultural change.

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COVER DESIGN: Laurence J. Nozik

ART CREDIT: *Fortune and her victims*, illustrated by Jean Colombe. French translation of Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae*. London, British Library, MS Harley 4336, fol. 1v. (c. 1477)

The Ohio State University Press
Columbus

www.ohiostatepress.org

ISBN13 978-0-8142-1190-8



9 780814 211908

